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OUTSIDER ART FAIR
2019

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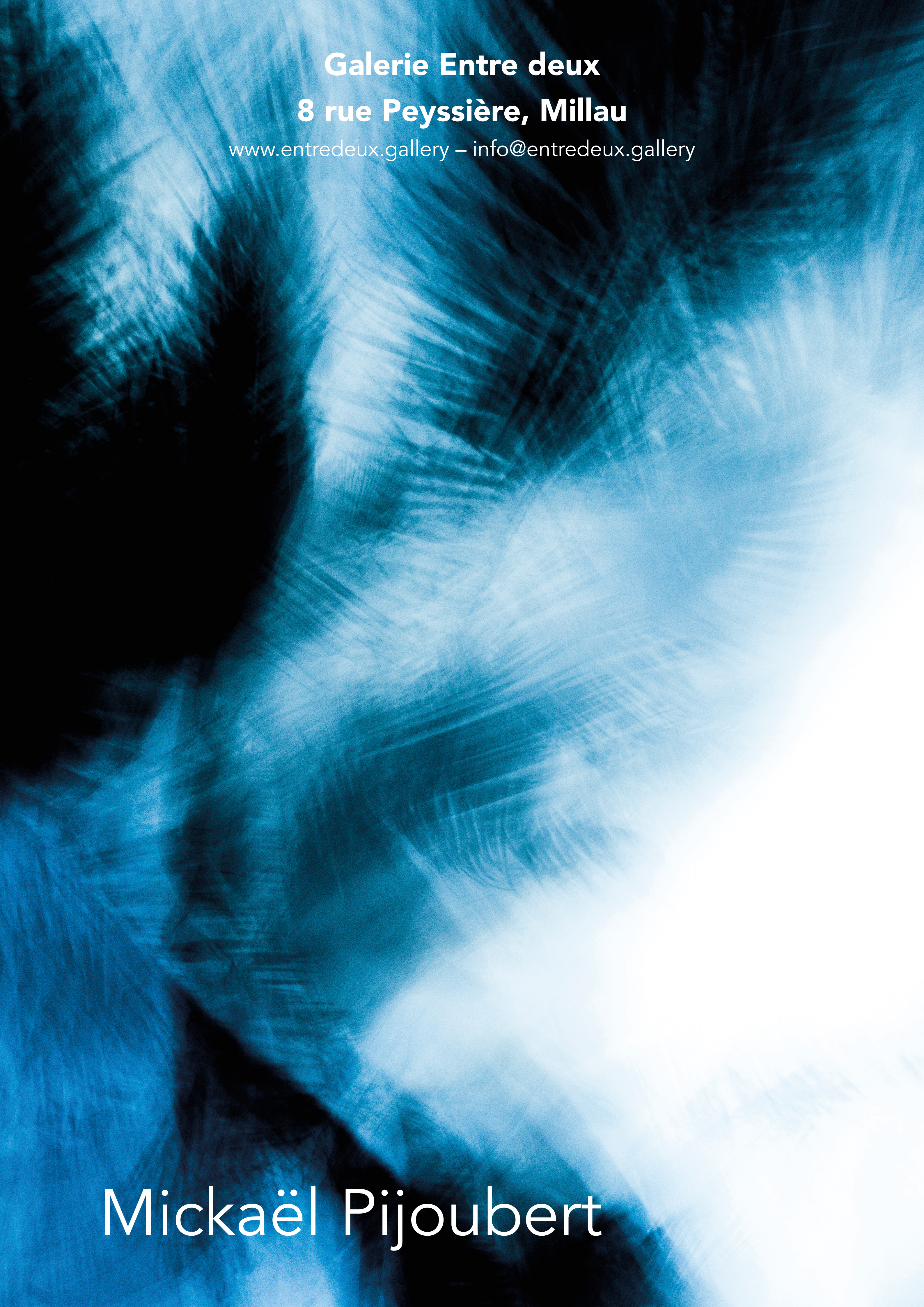

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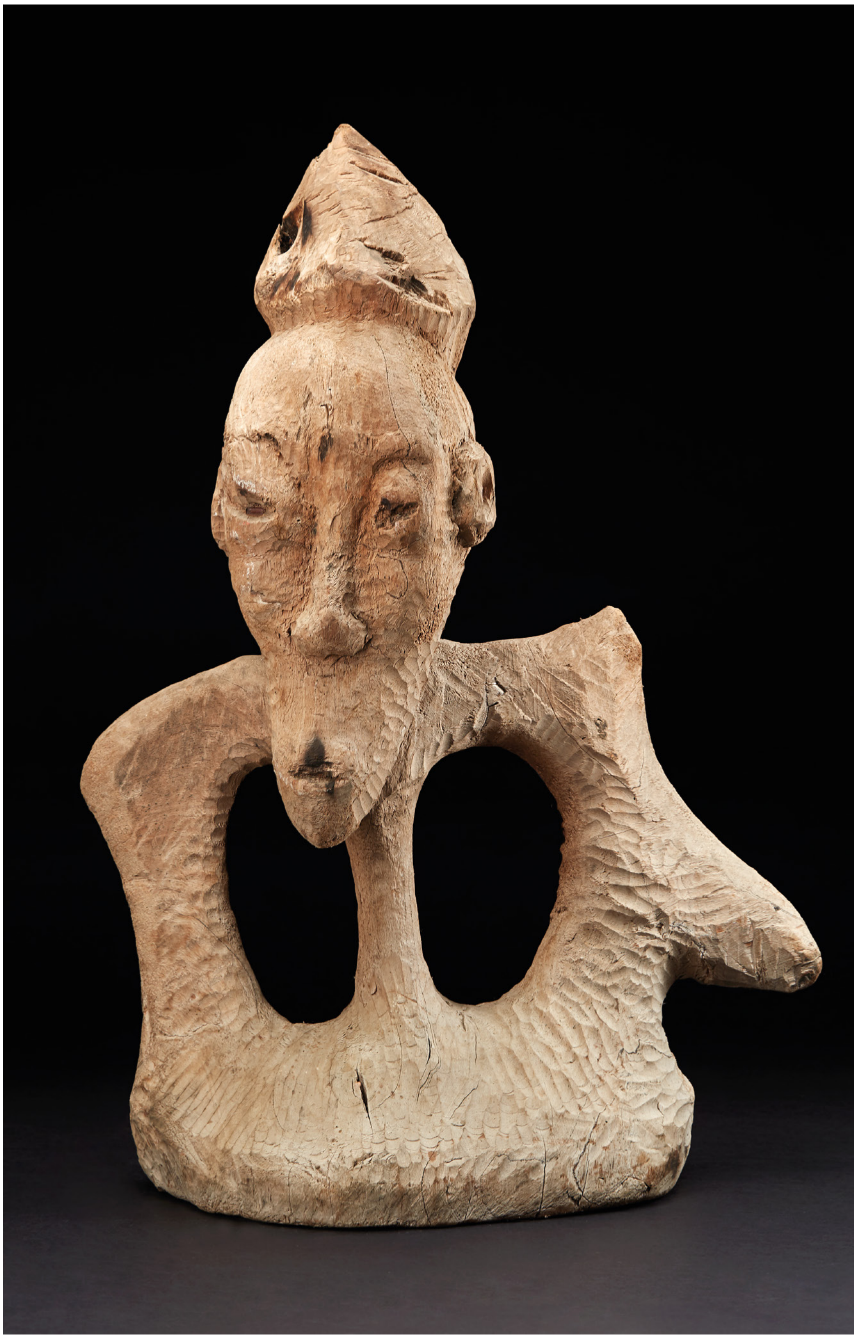

Untitled (*Figure*, 1980), Vincent Atherton.
Courtesy Cavin-Morris Gallery

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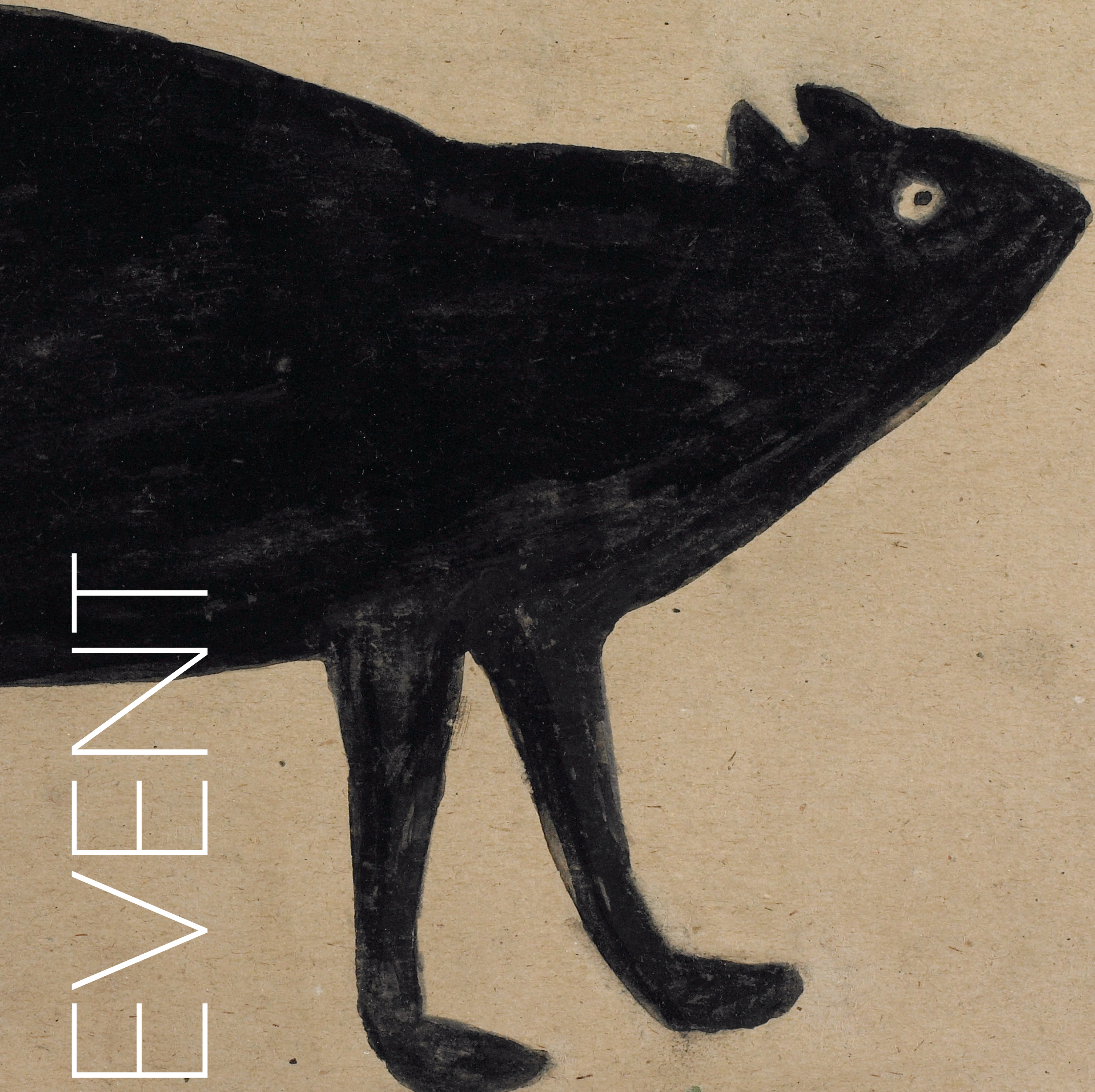
Cover: *Eight is Enough, Iowa* (c.1920-1930). Courtesy Steven S. Powers.

EVENT



Black Bear (detail, c.1939-1942), Bill Traylor.
Courtesy Just Folk

ART BRUT IN ALL ITS FORMS

More accessible and often more affordable than contemporary art, art brut seduces the world. From 17 to 20 January, the Outsider Art Fair in New York will provide an opportunity to discover this movement that escapes the rules of the art. Overview.

For its 27th edition, held at the Metropolitan Pavilion in New York from 17 to 20 January, the Outsider Art Fair will bring together a record number of participants: 67 exhibitors – including eight newcomers – from 37 cities and seven different countries. Created in 1993, this pioneering fair in the field of self-taught art has been showcasing raw art and its avatars for more than 25 years. Juggling familiar faces (Aloïse Corbaz, Henry Darger, Thornton Dial, William Edmondson, Martín Ramírez, Judith Scott, Bill Traylor or Adolf Wölfli to name but a few) alongside new talent, fair director Becca Hoffman has set out to win over an audience not necessarily familiar with the singular expressions of outsider art. "Every year, we present new discoveries as well as works by masters of the genre such as William Edmondson at Ricco-Maresca, Henry Darger at Carl Hammer or James Castle and Eugene von Bruenchenhein at Fleisher-Ollman", she explains.

This method has proven successful. After its acquisition in 2012 by Wide Open Arts, founded by gallery owner Andrew Edlin, the Outsider Art Fair tripled the number of visitors to its New York edition in 2013 and launched its Parisian version in the middle of FIAC week. A success that garnered the loyalty of gallery owners and attracts new exhibitors every year.

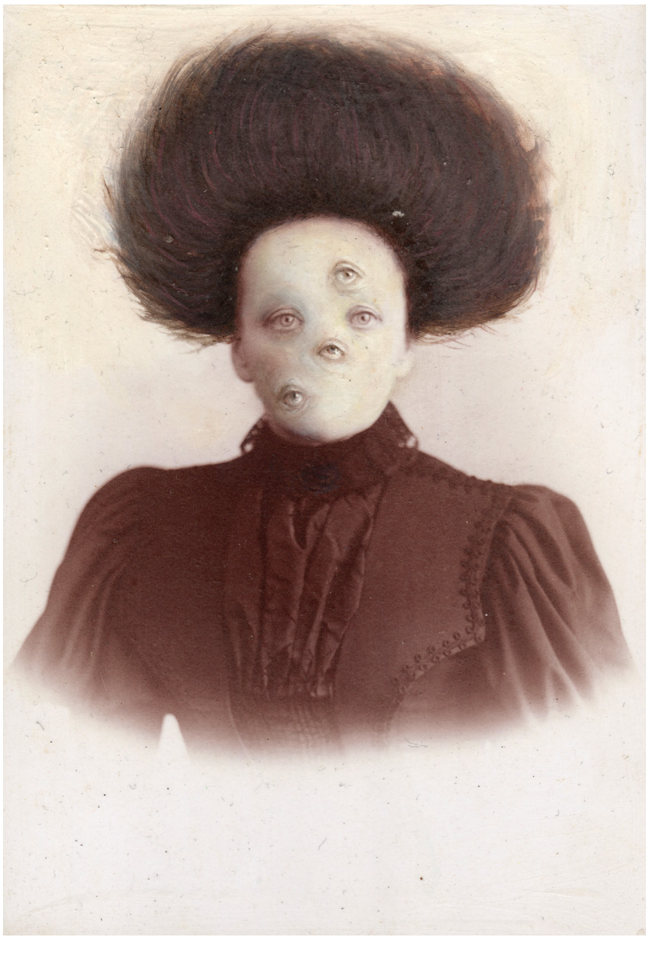
"My gallery has been participating in the fair since its very first edition in 1993", says Laurie G. Ahner, owner and director of the Happiness Gallery in Palm City. "It was very exciting because at that time, self-taught art was beginning to be recognized and respected as a significant field in the art world."

Time for recognition

The motivation of the participants is as much about good sales results as it is about public recognition. "I am new to the fair, this is my very first participation and I am delighted to be part of an event that mobilizes an audience of connoisseurs who appreciate the aesthetics of outsider art", notes Randy Rotter of the Nisqually Gallery (Bainbridge Island). This is a point of view shared by Kim Tong Won of Korea Art Brut Gallery, showing at the fair for the second time: "I would like to continue my presentation of the work of Korean artists in the field of art brut. For me, sales come second. For example, I will exhibit the *Cross to the 16 Buddhas*, a work that makes sense of the fusion of East and West."

Many art centers and institutions working directly with self-taught artists are also exhibiting at the Outsider Art Fair as a way to "meet aficionados and create lasting relationships with institutions similar to ours", says Cléa Massiani, exhibition coordinator at the Creativity Explored art center in San Francisco. For these organizations, which are often not-for-profit, exhibiting at the fair is a good way to promote and recognize the work of the artists they support. "This is our first exhibition at the Outsider Art Fair", says Nancy Gomez, executive director of Project Onward, a Chicago-based non-profit organization. "Our mission is to support artists who suffer from mental illness or developmental disabilities. My main objective is to show

Untitled (*Watching*, 2018), Jana Paleckova.
Courtesy Fred Giampietro Gallery



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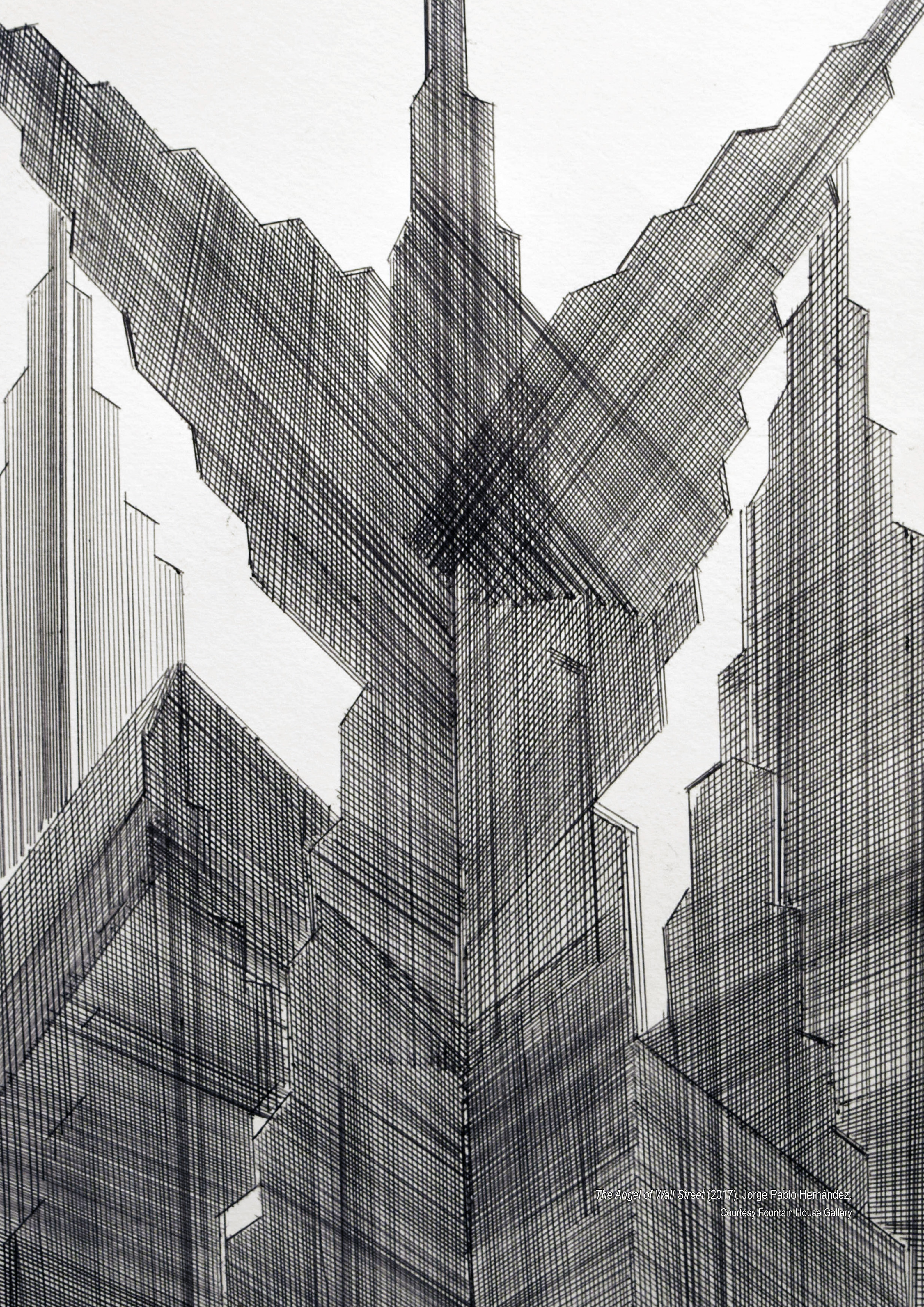


The Angel of Wall Street (2017), Jorge Pablo Hernández.

Courtesy Fountain House Gallery

their work to a national and international audience. The artist receives 50% of sales before taxes. Thus, the purpose of our participation is also to help artists develop their careers through the sale of their works."

Exploring known quantities and making new discoveries

Julie Saul (New York) will exhibit the photographs of two legendary artists, Morton Bartlett and Miroslav Tichý, and will introduce the work of Nikolay Bakharev, a self-taught Siberian photographer, while Almost Art Project (Beijing) will present the work of Chinese outsider artists such as Feng Cangyu, Li Qing and Luo Xiufang. The James Barron Art Gallery (Kent) will show the strange paintings and stone sculptures of the Italian Elisabetta Zangrandi. SAGE Studio (Austin) will feature drawings and paper sculpture by David Sulak. Jennifer Lauren (Manchester) will present Nek Chand's first work from the 1970s as well as Shinichi Sawada's ceramics.

Becca Hoffmann enthusiastically unveils the flagship work and new discoveries of the 27th edition": "The drawings of Angelika, a German woman interned in a psychiatric hospital during the Second World War, will be exhibited by Henry Boxer (London); assemblages inspired by John Foxell's Pop culture shown by Norman Brosterman; the imaginary worlds of Norimitsu Kokubo by Jennifer Lauren and finally the drawings with a political dimension by Jim Carrey by Maccarone. The fantastic drawings by self-taught Mexican artist Mario Mendoza will be presented by Julie Saul, who is exhibiting for the first time; Dutton will show the whimsical ceramics of Alan Constable, an artist working at Arts Projects. Finally, Steven Powers' exhibition "Finding North" will feature artists such as Forrest Bess and Ida Jones, as well as works created in Kansas State Insane Asylum."

Among the newcomers, Wilsonville will present the dreamlike landscapes of Australian artist Angus Warren and Andrew Edlin will present the ethereal drawings of Valentino Dixon, a 48-year-old artist who was recently released from prison after spending 27 years there for a murder he did not commit.

Many works by African-American artists will also be highlighted this year: Bill Traylor at Just Folk (Summerland); Ike Morgan and Hawkins Bolden at SARDAC (London); Mose Tolliver and Purvis Young at Main Street Gallery (Clayton); Lonnie Holley at American Primitive (New York) and Mary Whitfield presented by both Phyllis Stigliano Art Projects (Brooklyn) and gallery Bonheur (Palm City).

In addition to the gallery owners' exhibitions, the fair is equipped with two curatorial spaces, one dedicated to the exhibition "Good Kids: Underground Comics from China" and the other to gallery owner Phyllis Kind, a famous figure of outsider art who died in September 2018 at the age of 85. "This memorable stand will be curated by Edward Gomez of *Raw Vision* magazine and will bring together artists she has defended and highlighted throughout her career, such as Martin Ramirez, Adolf Wölfli, Hiroyuki Doi and Domenico Zindato", says the fair's director.

outsider art vs. contemporary art?

Raw art, outsider art, self-taught art, singular art… Behind this myriad of terms lies an art at the margin that escapes the constraints of academism and dominant culture. Of this movement theorized by Jean Dubuffet, at the same time initiator, discoverer and great collector of raw art, Becca Hoffman says: "outsider art is a generic term for self-taught and not academic art. Raw art refers more to the European production initially supported by Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s, although more recently, the term American raw art has begun to become more popular. Contemporary art is created by artists trained academically and whose works are informed by the system and research in art history."

Regarding this distinction from contemporary art, Nancy Gomez, Executive Director of Project Onward in Chicago details: "The biggest difference I see between outsider art and contemporary art is the abstract-conceptual tendency found in contemporary art works versus figuration in outsider art. Another difference concerns materials. I see many works of contemporary art that rely heavily on high-tech and expensive materials, while outsider art works are more intimate, smaller, using both traditional materials and objects for reuse."

Becca Hoffmann.
Courtesy Outsider Art Fair

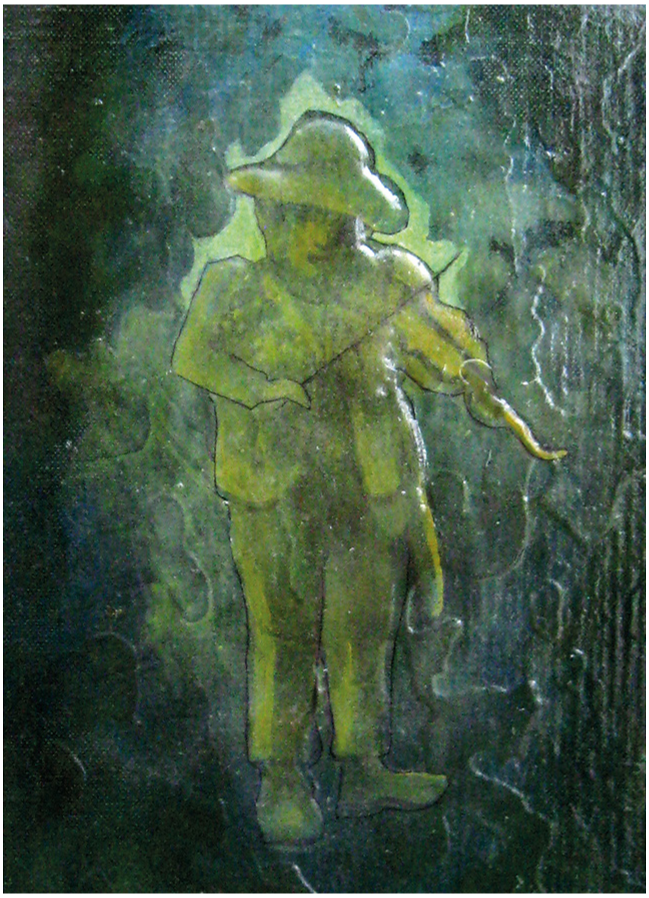
"Personally, I'm not a fan of contemporary art, because I feel it as cold, emotionless and often artificial", adds Laurie G. Ahner. "I travelled all over the world and so I discovered that these self-taught artists brought warmth, passion and humanity to us, the spectators, by drawing us into their inner lives. Often their works illuminate a form of spirituality and reflect joy and beauty. Their vibrant colors celebrate the glory of nature and the mysteries of the Earth. There is often a story to tell behind it, the passionate expression of a belief or a naturalistic observation of life."

Subversion, underground and counter-culture

Beyond the work, it is often the personal journey of the artists that seduces and touches collectors and gallery owners. In his *Fascicule de l'art brut n°1* published in 1964, Jean Dubuffet specified his definition of art brut and its artists: "Works written by persons foreign to intellectual circles, most often unscathed by any artistic education, and for whom invention is exercised, as a result, without any impact altering their spontaneity."

Designated as the art of madmen at the beginning of the 20th century, outsider art has long been associated with the marginalized, prisoners and patients interned in psychiatric hospitals for pathologies such as autism or schizophrenia. Hence, a certain fascination for their mystical, visionary works, sometimes referred to as mediumistic. "It is wonderful to see the dedication and sincerity of these artists who have not had the opportunity or the means to have an education or to be trained in the arts", says Laurie G. Ahner. Their art emerges with purity and originality from their heart and soul, often with little financial ambition or recognition. It is rewarding for me and my gallery to help them in their accomplishment by being attentive to their desire to be heard."

Outsider Art Fair 2019



Beginning (2002), John Barton.
Courtesy Galerie Bonheur

But outsider art is also rooted in underground and counter-culture, represented at the fair by “Good Kids: Underground Comics from China”, an exhibition dedicated to the subversive creations of Chinese comic book authors. “In the outsider art market, people can see unique works that refer to the madness, hope, wishes, dreams and even the sexuality of artists, and this in all honesty (and they are very honest about it!)”, explains Korean collector and gallery owner Kim Tong Won. “This allows us to have a more open mind about these people and also to help us get to know who they are”. Nancy Gomez adds: “I think the interest in outsider art will continue, but the trend will be from the isolated or alienated artist to self-taught artists who are part of a community like Project Onward where their art will be accepted and accepted for their quality and talent.”

An atypical market

The drawing of a border between raw art and contemporary art does not always meet with unanimous approval, however, the fact remains that outsider art is generating a real craze on the market. It is found in the heart of the temples of contemporary art and during its major fairs, FIAC, Frieze and even the Venice Biennale. Paradoxically, the recognition from the general public is sometimes done through blockbuster exhibitions of contemporary art stars claiming the heritage of raw art and Dubuffet like Keith Haring or Jean-Michel Basquiat. “As more and more encyclopedic institutions and contemporary art museums, as well as international biennials, exhibit outsider art, we can expect the public and the market to continue to expand”, says Becca Hofmann. “There is a well-accepted pantheon of masters such as Darger, Ramirez, Traylor and Edmondson who drive the highest auction prices. Then, we find both recognized artists and new ones who are constantly being discovered. The strength of their market depends on the works available, their visibility in exhibitions and, in proportion, their media coverage.” An observation shared by Laurie G. Ahner, “Since the opening of my gallery, I have seen the market take giant steps forward, including in terms of popularity. Nowadays, many galleries, collections, museums, authors and publications are interested in it. I can only hope that it will continue to expand and develop as collectors of all ages increasingly realize the importance of this treasure of creativity.”

At auction, raw art, which has long been the subject of mixed sessions with contemporary art, is seeing its thematic sales multiply, even if the rating of outsider artists, which varies greatly, does not reach the heights of contemporary artists except for masters of the genre. Cléa Massiani, exhibition coordinator at the Creativity Explored Art Center in San Francisco, confirms that “the biggest difference is in the prices, which are much lower and more affordable than the ‘general’ market for contemporary art. And I think that’s a good thing, since we know that prices are really out of control. Outsider art is attracting more and more attention and exhibitions hosted by major museums around the world attest to this.”

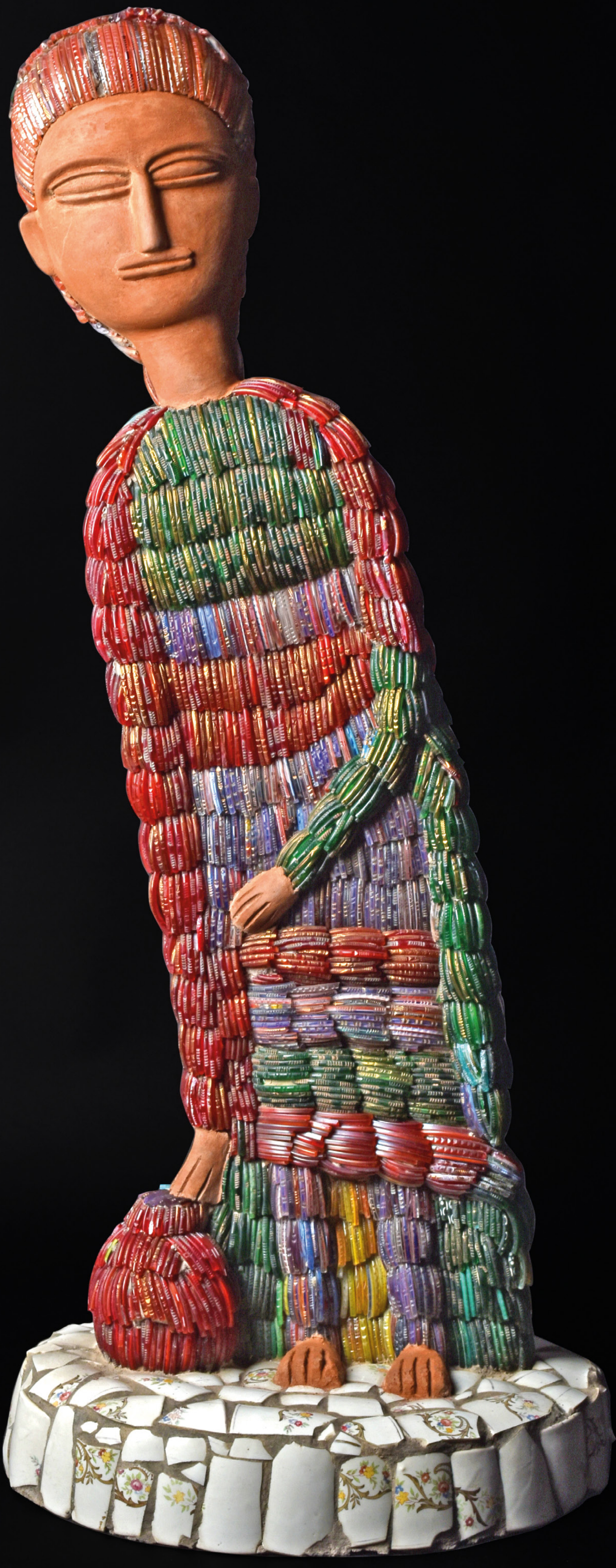
“The outsider art market is relatively recent, and therefore still small. There are only a few successful outsider artists and financial investment is not entirely certain, which is why it seems that collectors of contemporary art are still hesitant to fully accept this art form and acquire works on a massive scale. “But we are witnessing a turnaround”, says Sarah Galender Meyer of the Creative Growth Art Center.

Faced with this market, collectors of raw art, just as atypical as the artists themselves, escape the temptation of profiling. “outsider art collectors do not have a specific profile. It attracts experienced collectors of modern and contemporary art as well as first-time collectors, rock musicians, visual artists, designers, actors, poets and professionals of all kinds”, explains Becca Hoffmann. This trend is confirmed by Nancy Gomez: “Our collectors are diverse. Some follow the trends of outsider art or buy art according to aesthetic or stylistic criteria. Others acquire art because of their personal connections or the relationship they have built with artists over the years.” When she talks about her experience as a gallery owner, Laurie G. Ahner says, “Often, collectors of contemporary art pay exorbitant amounts of money for the works in the hope that they will make a profit from this purchase. Outsider art collectors buy this art because they love the works and are delighted to own them, and to have them recognized. Not only is outsider art more affordable, but it also allows direct support to artists if they are still alive. Anyway, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. My collectors have very diverse profiles, all types of origin, income, profession, age, residence and interests combined. They tend to be educated people who have traveled and appreciate the diversity of the world's cultures and want to surround themselves with works of art that convey spirituality, joy and often a fascinating history.”

In many respects, art brut escapes the rules, including those that define the art market. Despite the general public's enthusiasm, detailed knowledge of outsider art still remains slightly out of reach, a paradoxical situation that Kim Tong Won sums up, “I think that the official art world is becoming more and more accepting of raw art, even though it often has little knowledge of its values. People are always prejudiced. For more than ten years, I have been a merchant and collector of raw art, and yet even today, I am still the only collector in Korea.”

Carine Claude

Outsider Art Fair 2019
From Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 January.
“Collectors” preview on Thursday 17 January. Metropolitan Pavillion.
125 West 18th Street. New York. USA. www.outsiderartfair.com



Untitled (c.1970), Nek Chand.
Courtesy Jennifer Lauren Gallery

ZOOM

Ask the program!

The Outsider Art Fair is also an opportunity to discover the different expressions of art brut through its program of conferences, curatorial events and exhibitions on the fair site and outside the walls.

- **"Unusual Brains: Neurodiversity and Artistic Creation", New Museum Theatre, Tuesday 15 January, 7-9 pm**

  As part of the 2019 OAF Talks, this conference will focus on how the act of creation for artists with psychiatric disorders is carried out (Adolf Wölfli was diagnosed as schizophrenic), but also on how a new approach to autism has enabled artists like Dan Miller or Susan Te Kahurangi King to gain greater recognition for their work. With Eric R. Kandel, a neuroscience researcher and 2000 Nobel Prize winner in medicine, artist Linda Carmella Sibio and psychiatrist Gerhard Dammann.

- **"Trolling a Hotel", Ace Hotel, Tuesday 15 to Sunday 20 January**

  Accessible free of charge to the public, the Ace Hotel will host "Trolling a Hotel", a whimsical project by artist Jen Miller (alias Reverend Jen), a Manhattan painter, performer and poet who will exhibit her unique collection of troll dolls.

- **"Beauty in Imperfection", Ace Hotel, 16 to 31 January**

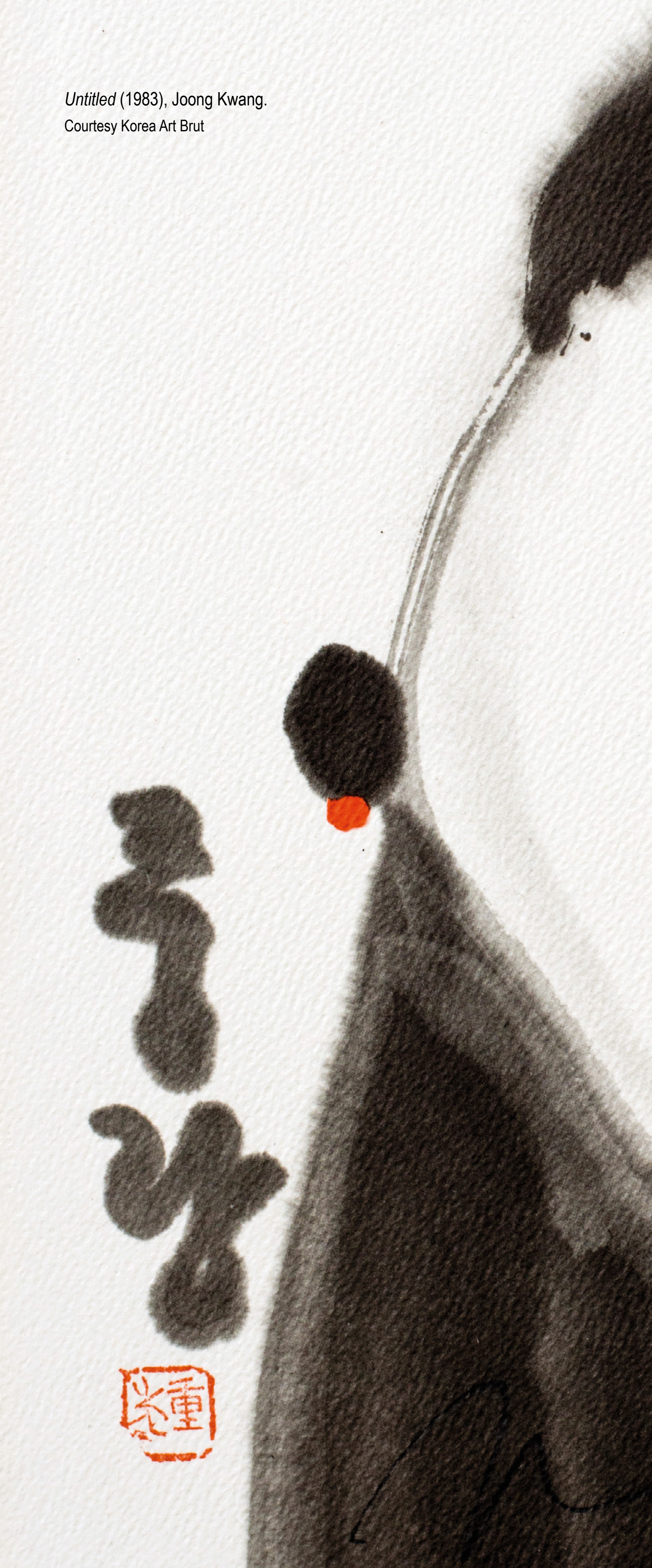
  Curated by Atsuko Barouh, the exhibition "Beauty in Imperfection" will offer a discovery of popular Japanese textiles called Boro. Worn by the working classes since the 19th century, according to the curator these clothes made from reused fabrics are impregnated by the concept of Wabi Sabi, an aesthetic philosophy rooted in Zen. Free admission.

- **"Voices and Visions" screening evening, Ace Hotel, Wednesday 16 January, 6.30-9 pm**

  In partnership with the Outsider Art Fair, Art21 and *Raw Vision* magazine are organizing Voices and Visions, a short film screening evening to explore the complexity of outsider art and discover the work of famous and unknown artists, including a spotlight on the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, San Francisco Bay. Free admission.

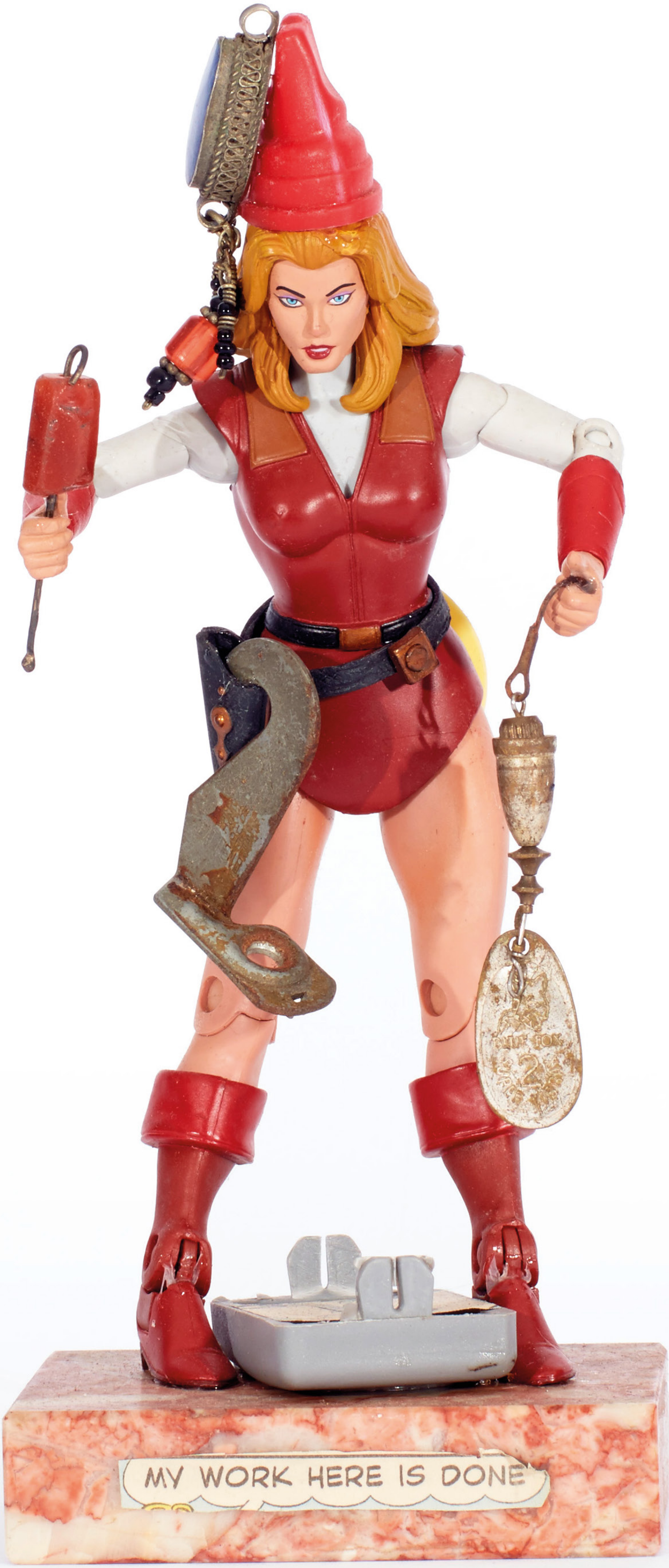
- **"Good Kids: Underground comics from China", Outsider Art Fair, Metropolitan Pavillion**

  Under the leadership of Zhou Yi and Brett Littman, this curatorial space of the Outsider Art Fair will present the work of 10 Chinese artists and comic book authors. "These underground artists are hard to find, even in China, because their comics push the limits of Chinese social norms both in terms of sexuality and nudity as well as violence", explains Becca Hofmann, director of the Outsider Art Fair. Because very often this confidential production is distributed outside official channels, to obtain a copy it is often necessary to obtain a channel directly to the artist who will print them upon request...



Untitled (1983), Joong Kwang.
Courtesy Korea Art Brut

INTERVIEW


MY WORK HERE IS DONE

My Work here is Done, John Foxell.
Courtesy Norman Brosterman

"A GENRE, NOT A MOVEMENT"

Outsider Art Fair owner Andrew Edlin speaks about the 27th edition of the New York fair; the mounting demand for outsider art among contemporary collectors; and the importance of acknowledging the genre's impact on art history.

Well-known New York dealer of outsider art, Andrew Edlin first engaged with the genre in the 1990s, when trying to help his self-taught uncle, Paul Edlin, get his work into galleries. From that point onwards, he developed an eclectic mix of artists whose work he started showing in his Hoboken brownstone in 1999, moving to a commercial space in Chelsea a couple of years later, courtesy of a friend who was living there on the sly. A year later Edlin was able to move into a bonafide gallery space on 20th Street at which point he started receiving attention for his exhibition program and list of artists. Now in his seventh year as owner of the Outsider Art Fair (OAF), he's feeling optimistic about the future, and certain that the days of any skepticism around outsider art are truly in the past.

How are you feeling about the fair this year?

I feel really great about it. This is the Outsider Art Fair's seventh year under our direction and we're getting better at it, smarter and better prepared. It's really gratifying how much more professional the OAF has become, while still maintaining its renegade feel. In our first go-round in 2013, there were 32 dealers and 3,200 visitors. Ever since then, we've had over 60 dealers (66 this year) and between 10-12,000 guests. It's our 27th year in New York, so it's really an institution. I'm not sure of the statistics, but it's got to be one of the longer running fairs around.

Public and institutional interest in outsider art has been growing year after year. Why do you think so many people are now engaging with outsider art?

I think part of it is no big mystery: eventually cream rises to the top. I mean that sincerely. This art is very powerful. You don't have to come to it with a deep art educational background to appreciate it. The works speak more directly than a lot of contemporary art, which requires some level of being initiated into art world culture in order to fully comprehend it. As more people get exposed to outsider art and learn about it (which is happening partly because of the digital age we're in, but also because big-time museums and biennials are showing the work), it's a natural progression that the more people learn about it, the more demand there is to see it, and for the press to write about it, and for collectors to buy it. I know art historically, outsider art or self-taught art has had cycles of being in and out of vogue, but I think those days are over. I think it's a straight upward trajectory now – one that's been going since before the 2013 Venice Biennale, which was a watershed moment, along with other major shows that year including the Carnegie International and the Hayward Gallery's "Alternative Guide to the Universe". The latter was Ralph Rugoff's project and I'm excited to see what he does for the next Venice Biennale, which he's directing. So I think this trajectory for outsider art's penetration into the more contemporary landscape will continue: it's here to stay.

Andrew Edlin.
Courtesy Andrew Edlin Gallery

Andrew Edlin

How do you feel about and deal with the perceived contradiction between outsider art – by its nature "outside" the mainstream – becoming part of the established art world it often opposes?

Sometimes it can be frustrating. A lot of people have this "either or" paradigm about outsider art being a separate thing or integrated, and I've never quite understood that. As art on its own, outsider art stands up anywhere: in any museum, or contemporary show or art fair. But at the same point, of course it also looks great in the context of its own genre. I don't adhere to this philosophy that outsider art can't be both. For instance, as a gallerist, I show at OAF, but I also show at Art Basel Miami Beach, Frieze – I've shown at Armory, and it's great – it's even more exciting sometimes to show at contemporary fairs because the art stands out more dramatically. Outsider art is obviously hugely influential on contemporary artists and it's got its place in art history, as evidenced by more and more shows at places like the Met, Brooklyn Museum, MoMA… virtually all of them are showing outsider art on some level now. Yet there's sometimes a false construct when you see outsider and insider artists' works placed in an exhibition together. The curator may imply there's some kind of conversation or aesthetic dialogue, but that's just not the case. The insider artists are influenced by the outsiders but it's a one-way street, as the outsiders had no knowledge of or dialogue with the insiders. So it comes off that the outsider artists are being used to elucidate the influences of the artists inside the canon rather than being examined in their own right and for their own merits. Outsider artists are not hanging out with each other talking about their dealers or the composition of their latest work. It's not a movement, it's a genre.

With the increase in institutional exhibitions and collecting, is there a risk that certain outsider art ceases to be acknowledged for its original genre, and instead becomes contemporary or modern?

In the outsider world, of course we love it when the work is in big museums and the Venice Biennale, because we're evangelists for the work and the more people who see it the better. But it troubles me that there's almost a disparagement of outsider art. Occasionally, when these large institutions start showing outsider art, artists that dealers and curators who've been working in the outsider art field for decades have spent years championing, they imply "we're the great liberators now, and we've freed this work from the slum of outsider art and we've anointed it as belonging in the hallowed institution." That, for me, is false and damaging because they conflate the exhibition context – the hallowed institution – with the circumstances in which the artwork was created, and there's no connection. Just because Thornton Dial is being shown at the Met, or Henry Darger is at MoMA doesn't mean that those artists knew anything about, or were informed by, the art world culture, or that they had any aspirations towards that. Because Judith Scott had a solo show at the Brooklyn Museum changes nothing about her story as an artist which is, of course, a prototypically outsider one.

Do you find that – because of this lack of knowledge about art world culture on the part of the artists – there is a healthier relationship between collector-viewer and artist-artwork?

I always say one way to describe outsider art is that there's less distance between the artist and the art. It's more overtly autobiographical. Formal art education acts as a filter, so outsider art is less filtered and the art is often more personal because it's taking less detours between the artist's brain and their hand. And if something is more personal, then it's more universal.

What's the main profile of your collectors, if any?

We're finding two basic profiles: the first is people who are just really focusing on collecting outsider art, and then the other is just people who collect everything and they love this material too. There are definitely more collectors stepping into the field in a big way in the last few years, and that's really exciting – especially when you consider that our fair is relatively small. Two or three big collectors starting out can have a noticeable impact on the business done in the entire fair. The New York show attracts predominantly Americans, though we get plenty of collectors who come from Europe: from Holland, England, Switzerland, France, Germany. It's a pretty broad audience.

And the dealers – are they galleries that specialize in outsider art, or broader contemporary art dealers?

For the most part it's still galleries that are specializing in outsider art, but we do have contemporary dealers or dealers like myself who show a combination. It's hard to imagine just showing art based on a categorical designation. You show what moves you, what you believe in. I love outsider art and the handmade, soulful component of it, and so even with the trained artists that I work with I still feel the aesthetic characteristics are the same. I hope that as more contemporary dealers step into the field of outsider art, we'll be able to get more of them into the fair. Barbara Gladstone just started handling Guo Fengyi, a phenomenal artist whose work several OAF galleries, including my own, have showed. We've had contemporary dealers like James Fuentes, Jack Hanley, and this year Maccarone, participate. I think that's going to continue to happen as the fair and the field gain more prominence.

Is it possible to talk about a market in the traditional sense when looking at "outsider art"? For example, there are ethical arguments around whether a price tag should be attached to some pieces; and at the other end of the scale you have skeptics who question the credentials of self-taught artists.

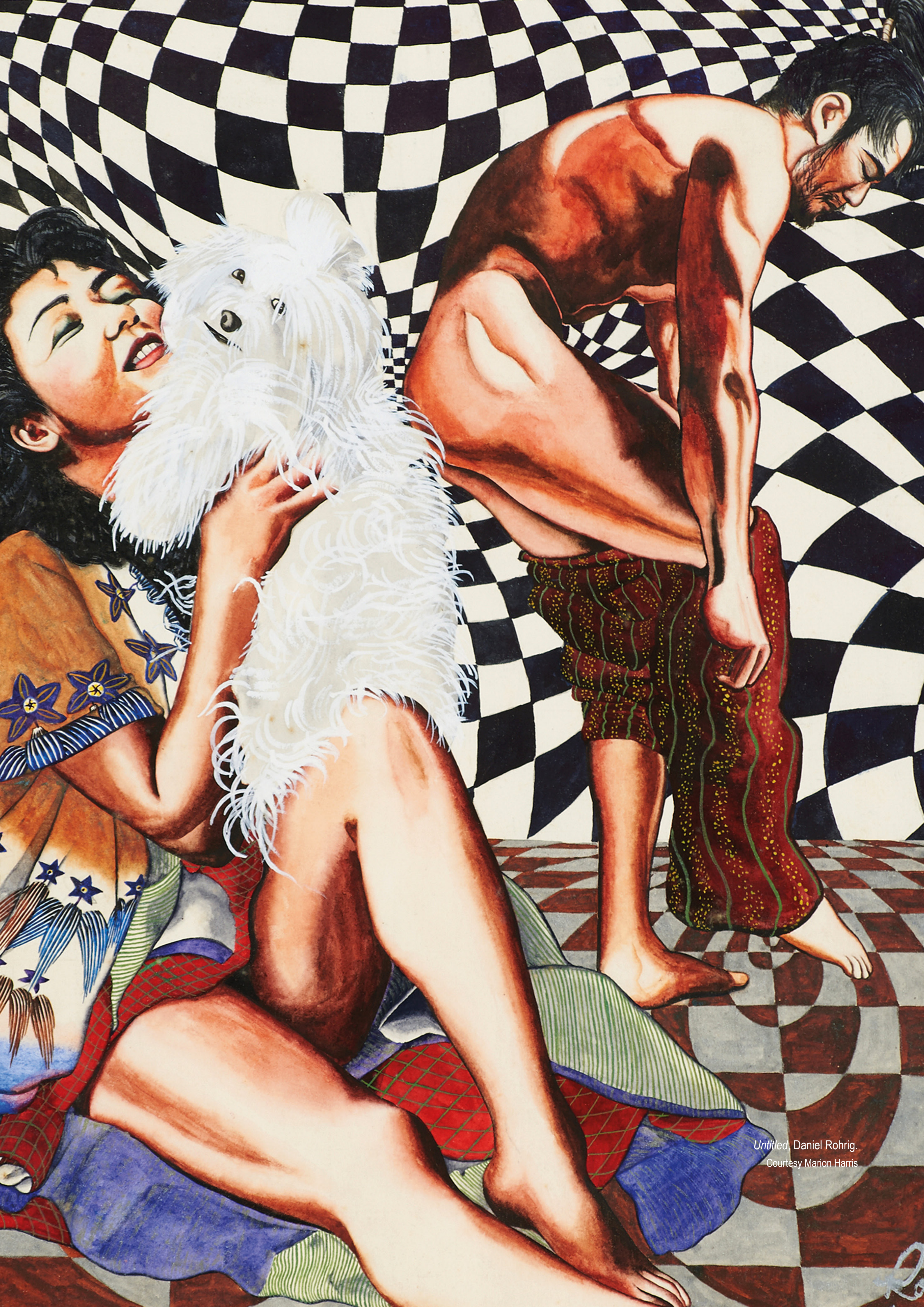
Of course you can. Christie's has an auction now that's devoted only to outsider art, it's on its fourth or fifth year. There's definitely a market for this material, starting with the top names like Henry Darger, Martín Ramírez, Bill Traylor: those works are commanding high prices both at galleries and at auctions. Like anything else, the laws of supply and demand are in play, and I think that's even more so with outsider art than contemporary art because there are fewer machinations and less hype involved. There's much less of a presence in the larger auction market and, frankly, just less material. But still, collectors like to be reassured by certain art world sanctification, so the more the artists have been written about, the more auction records, the more collections, the more museum shows… lends credibility that reassures collectors, and that's true of contemporary art and outsider art. That said, we're past the point where people are asking "Is this really economically viable?" It's not a new thing any more. It's been written about time and time again, they're studying it in art history classes. That kind of nervousness is hardly a factor.

How is the Paris fair different to New York?

The fair in Paris is going into its seventh year and growing steadily. It's a much more intimate fair compared to New York. We had 3 dealers last edition. In Paris, OAF runs during FIAC, whereas in New York it is pretty much a stand-alone event. The interest still leans more towards European art brut at the Paris fair, so there is a lot of room for development there.

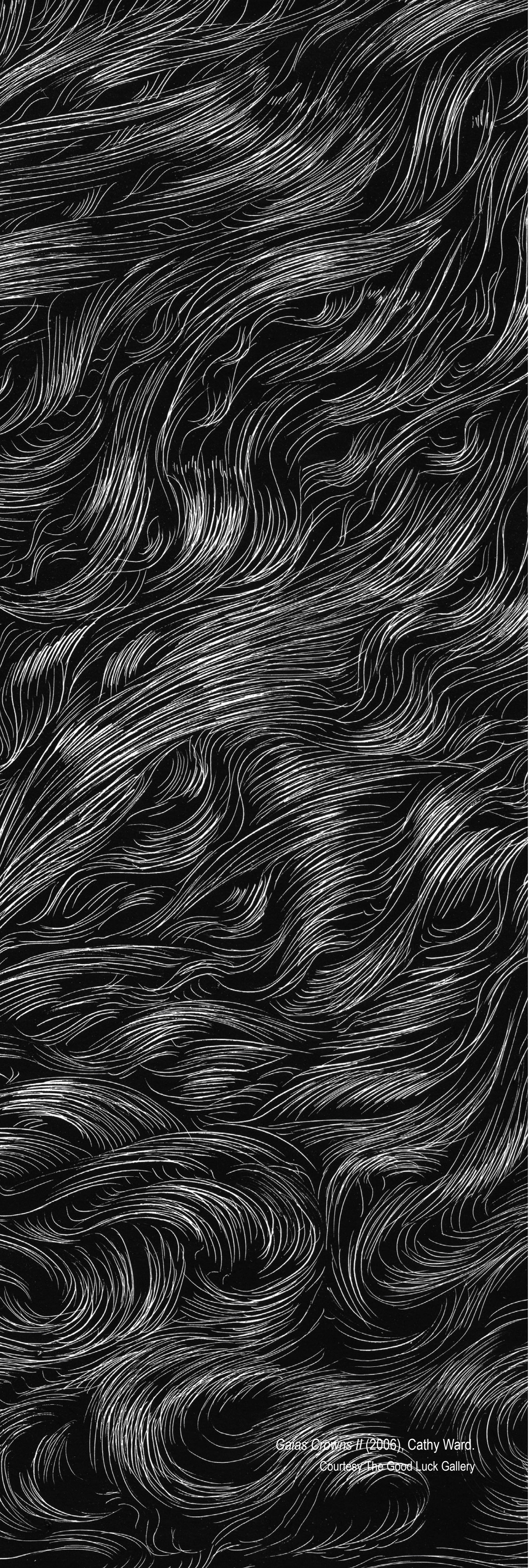
There was news of you starting a fair in Basel, which was then postponed – will that still be happening in the future?

We had designs on having a fair in Basel – that's a trademark of the ambition we have – but a few unexpected things came up and we decided to focus on strengthening Paris, so we don't have any imminent plans to do a fair there, but we are definitely looking at other initiatives that will get our dealers and the works they represent in front of larger audiences. Stay tuned on that front!



Untitled, Daniel Rohrig.

Courtesy Marion Harris



Gaias Crowns II (2006), Cathy Ward.
Courtesy The Good Luck Gallery

Andrew Edlin

You've mentioned your audience is predominantly American and European, though a great deal of outsider art comes from Asia. How does this play out across the fair?

Yokiko Koide, a dealer from Tokyo, has been a stalwart at OAF for many years. Now we have Atsuko Barouh who also shows Japanese Art Brut; Almost Art from China, Korea Art Brut from Seoul, and one of our curated spaces this year which is focused on underground zines and comics from China. The work that we're seeing from Japan is, for the most part, produced by artists with disabilities in workshops. We have similar programs in America and Europe. Here in the States we have Creative Growth, Fountain House, LAND, Pure Vision, Creativity Explored and many others – in Europe the most renowned is Galerie Gugging, just outside of Vienna. I think we have nine or ten exhibitors from workshops at OAF this year.

How does OAF work to highlight these workshops, and the profile of the artists whose work is exhibited at the fair?

We do things that raise their visibility as we would with any of our exhibitors. This year we're going to have a screening of a documentary about the Creative Growth. So, certainly, the fair is a vehicle to promote and make people aware of all of the dealers, artists, workshops and organizations.

What makes an exciting booth exhibition for you?

I prefer visually interesting, curated booths, where the dealer is trying to create more of an exhibition rather than just get as much inventory on the wall as possible. That's generally what people try to do at contemporary fairs, but historically, at OAF, there's been more of a salon style hanging. One of the things that we've tried to instill at OAF is to encourage dealers to give artwork more breathing room, and to curate a little more sparsely. That said, we don't want to go too far because a certain funkiness in booth presentation is also a hallmark of OAF, so we ride the line between hanging a more tightly curated booth and a salon style approach.

What are the highlights of this year's fair in terms of curation?

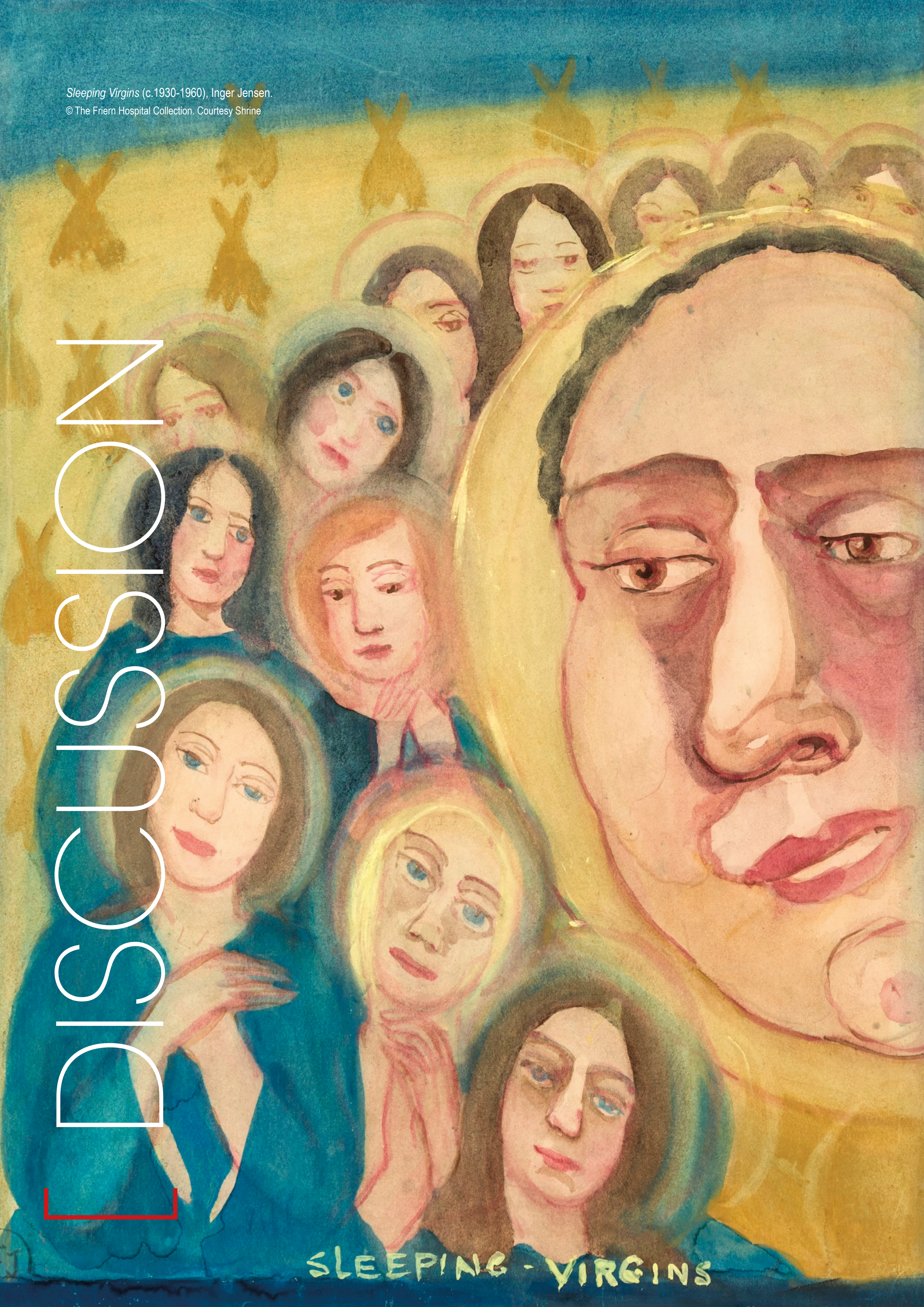
This year we have two curated booths and I'm really excited to see those. Brett Littman is co-curating with Yi Zhao the Chinese zines and underground comics booth; Brett was the longtime director of the Drawing Museum in New York and now he's the director of the Noguchi Museum. He's had his finger on the pulse of outsider art forever, and he's co-curating that booth so I think it's going to be fabulous. Then we're dedicating a booth to the late dealer Phyllis Kind. Our careers crossed a little bit; she was a real force of nature. We've got a booth that's going to be curated with works by artists that she really championed. That should be really special – a great bit of art history in our field. Then there are some other real wildcards. I can't wait to see the Jim Carrey works. There will be works by the great masters that have been in private collections for years and are coming back out onto the market… there's always something to surprise at this fair.

What advice would you give to first time visitors to the fair, who are perhaps more used to larger contemporary or traditional art fairs?

I think with a lot of major contemporary art fairs, you know what to expect when you go to visit: there's a certain homogeneity about it because, after all, all the artists are informed by art history and so to some degree there's an insular conversation – contemporary artists are absorbing their influences and making commentary through their art, which can be very interesting. But when you walk into the OAF you get right away that it's a different thing. Obviously there's a hierarchy, as you have with contemporary art, there are the acclaimed masters, but there are new discoveries being made all the time. I'd say have fun and look at everything! Leave your preconceived notions at the door. The work is very inviting, there's more of a joyful spirit and a healthy dose of soul! The dealers are very open to talking and sharing their knowledge. They are very passionate about the work and in many cases they happen to be the foremost worldwide experts on the artists they are showing.

Laura Archer

DISCUSSION


SLEEPING - VIRGINS

Sleeping Virgins (c.1930-1960), Inger Jensen.

© The Friern Hospital Collection. Courtesy Shrine

THE INNER WORKINGS OF OUTSIDER ART

Scott Ogden, who operates Shrine Gallery in New York City, and Carl Hammer of the Carl Hammer Gallery in Chicago, are two of foremost collectors and gallerists of outsider art. These dealers discuss their galleries, their experiences in the world of outsider art and their visions for its future.

January marks the anniversaries of two of the world's most innovative outsider art galleries. Artist-turned-gallerist Scott Ogden first opened his gallery, Shrine, in 2016. Stumbling across a studio in New York's Lower East Side, Ogden renovated the small space into a vibrant outsider and contemporary art gallery. An art student and filmmaker himself, Ogden uses his gallery to play with the notion of what an exhibition really is and show the kind of work that captivates him. While only three years old, Shrine is an emerging hotspot where art, media and culture collide. In Chicago, Carl Hammer has been representing outsider artists for forty years. Opening his first gallery in 1979, Hammer has overseen the evolution of outsider art since the very start, from working among some of the earliest proponents of the genre – the Chicago Imagists and the Hairy Who – to representing the top names in today's outsider art market. The Carl Hammer Gallery is recognized internationally as a haven for outsider artists both old and new.

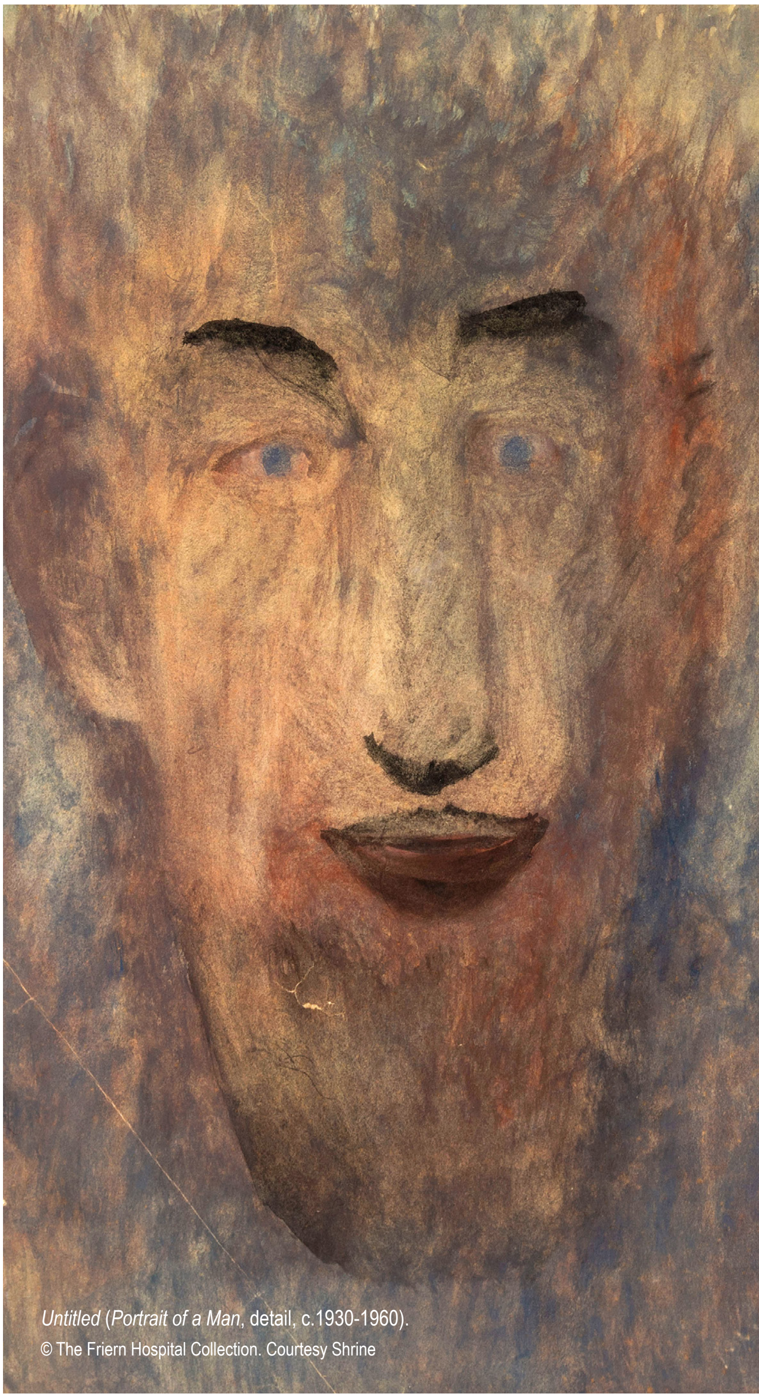
How did you first became involved in outsider art?

Scott Ogden: I started really young, in the early 1990s while I was a college student in Austin, Texas. I was getting my BFA, so art was already on my mind. But one day, I stumbled across a lunchtime lecture on Texas prison art. It was very unique, totally different from the kinds of things I was seeing in my art history classes. And then, one of my professors recommended I check out a nearby folk art gallery. So I took a trip to the gallery and that completely changed my idea of what art was or could be. I started working at the gallery, exchanging my time for works of art. And I would buy works whenever I had a little extra money. And after twenty years, I had developed quite a collection.

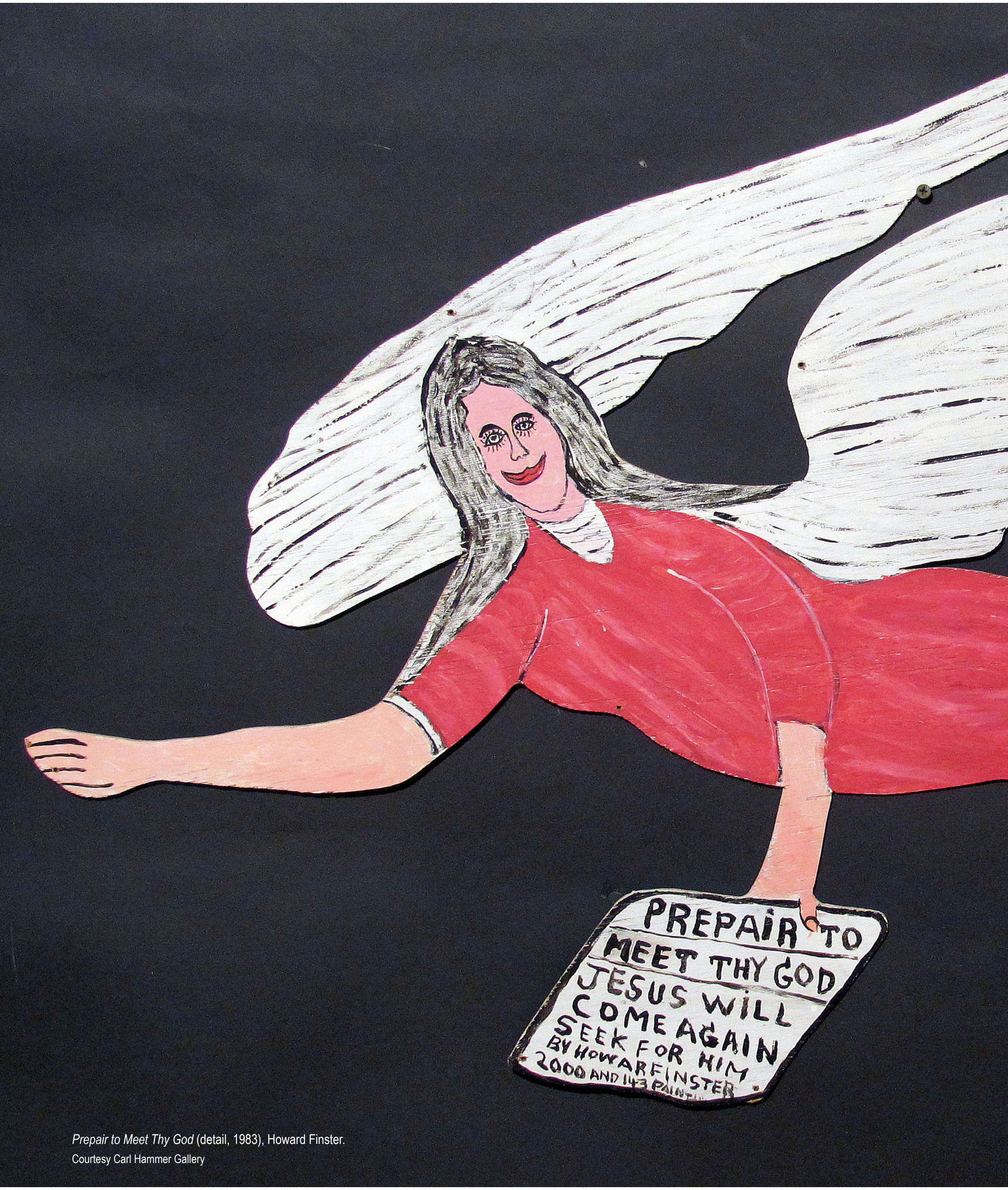
Carl Hammer: I got my start as a high school English teacher. Working in the humanities was a very formative experience for me. I always had an interest in art, and that shaped how and what I taught my students. While young, I also began collecting art, mainly folk art – I suppose that is what you would call outsider art today. At that time, the term "outsider art" was never used, likely because it had not even been invented at that point. But either way, my interest in art began to mold into a kind of aesthetic. It shaped what I wanted to teach and collect.

What inspired you to start your gallery?

Carl Hammer: By the 1970s, my ex-wife and I had amassed a pretty substantial collection, so we decided to open a gallery. At that time, it was called Hammer and Hammer American Folk Art. We thought we would be making a big splash on the scene, since no one was selling this kind of work at that time. It was an exciting time, and there were some really amazing influences in Chicago. Phyllis Kind was making a huge impact with her gallery, and she was a real groundbreaker for introducing self-taught artists to the contemporary art market. And we found ourselves surrounded and supported by the Chicago Imagists and the Hairy Who School, which helped to publicize what we were doing and gave us some notoriety.



Untitled (*Portrait of a Man*, detail, c.1930-1960).
© The Friern Hospital Collection. Courtesy Shrine


PREPAIR TO
MEET THY GOD
JESUS WILL
COME AGAIN
SEEK FOR HIM
BY HOWARFINSTER
2000 AND 143 PAINT

Prepair to Meet Thy God (detail, 1983), Howard Finster.
Courtesy Carl Hammer Gallery

Scott Ogden: Well, I was actually looking in New York City for an arts studio for myself. And somewhere along the way, I came across this space in the Lower East Side. It was pretty small but it had a really cool vibe and I fell in love with it. Instead of using it as a studio, one of my friends recommended that I start a gallery, and a few months later, I found out the space was available and I rented it. Turning it into a gallery became sort of a DIY process, renovating it and opening it up to the public. And of course, starting a gallery is really different than making art. There are lots of things to attend to, from the website to installing the shows. And then there's the business side, in addition to the creative side, which you have to balance. Shrine is still a pretty small organization, so most of the work falls to me. But we officially opened in January 2016 and since then the gallery has really taken off – now we represent quite a few artists, both outsider and contemporary.

How would you define outsider art?

Carl Hammer: Well, when I began my gallery the term "outsider artist" did not exist. I think the phrase really came about with Dubuffet and what he called art brut. I would say my definition is pretty close to his. For me, what sets outsider art apart from other genres is the artists themselves. With outsider art, there is a lack of awareness of the art world itself. The artists work instinctively, not because they see themselves as artists but because they have a compulsive need to use materials and make things. They are not attempting to create *art*, they are not copying works they have seen or trying to produce something to sell or show. This differs from trained artists because there is no schooling, no copying, no awareness of what it is they are creating. Instead, their process of creation comes from an inner, private discovery – by creating, they are achieving some sort of fulfillment. Take Bill Traylor or Joseph Yoakum, for example, who were compelled to make art based on their dreams.

Scott Ogden: I would say outsider art is highly individual in nature, which separates it from other genres like contemporary art. This is because it comes from a different place of intent, usually from artists whose unique life experiences lead them to create this work. For me, outsider art is extremely pure, the kind of work that you just cannot do once you become a student. Outsider artists are compelled to make things in a way which students cannot do, because it requires a different way of thinking about the process of making and of art itself. And seeing this kind of art affected how I was making my own art, because I realized my education prevented me from creating something like that.

Has the genre of "outsider art" changed and evolved over the course of your career?

Carl Hammer: Absolutely, I would say outsider art has changed in many ways, some good and some bad. It has certainly become broader and more diverse. There is a loosening regarding what outsider art is – the genre is becoming infiltrated by "insiders" and the work being presented is not necessarily what we would consider traditional outsider art. Economics, too, has become part of the outsider art world, which I think sometimes causes us to change our standards of what is worthy of display. On the other hand, exhibitions and fairs, like the Outsider Art Fair, have done an incredible job promoting this genre and educating the public on what this work is all about. I think the most important thing going forward is to approach outsider art with as much honesty as we can, to maintain the purity of the art form.

Scott Ogden: Yes, the field is definitely changing. I think a large part of this is because outsider art is becoming more accepted, more mainstream. One thing I have noticed is an increase in the number of artists beginning to identify themselves as outsider artists, something which did not happen when I started 20 years ago. I encourage artists not to define themselves in this way – once you consider yourself an outsider artist, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the genre, the art market, and the world of art. And this, I think, is problematic because it contradicts what the genre purports to be.

DISCUSSION

Carl Hammer + Scott Ogden

Do you think there are problems associated with the term “outsider”?

Scott Ogden: That was one of the first things that struck me about calling it “outsider” art – it is not great terminology. For myself, I do not have an issue with the word – I think it is kind of cool. To me, it refers to something “outside of the mainstream”, which is not inherently bad. But for some people, the word can seem problematic because it implies the artists are somehow outside accepted standards. I think outsider art stands apart because visually, it is different. But it is also a form of art, really a subset of contemporary art. While outsider artists’ intent and materials may be different from traditional artists, if they are a true outsider artist, then they are also a contemporary artist. And as such, they deserve to be held to the same standard and be part of the same market as other artists.

Carl Hammer: When I began my collecting, these works were referred to as “American Folk Art” not “Outsider Art.” Obviously, an evolution has taken place to produce the genre we have now. For me, I do not see any problem with the term and I think it will stick, because we need a way to designate the different-ness of this kind of art. It is unlike any other genre because of the way in which it is inspired and created, outside the world of trained or “educated” artists. That said, the term “outsider” should not have any other meaning attached to it, because the term does not refer to the quality or the nature of the work itself. So I think we should be careful how we use it, to be aware of its meaning but not use it to signify something it does not.

Do you think technology will play a large part in shaping the future of outsider art?

Carl Hammer: Technology has definitely changed the field of outsider art to some extent. Most importantly, it has introduced new methods for using technology to create and share art. Certainly, artists have always used technology, whether it was the tools of paper and pencil, to create their work, but today’s technology pushes this to an even further degree, and changes the terms of what constitutes outsider art and what does not. I think technology is something we will have to wrestle with as the world continues to evolve. We will need to find ways to understand what and who is an outsider artist and what kind of materials and technologies can be used while still keeping the genre of outsider art pure and honest.

Scott Ogden: The field of outsider art is definitely shifting, and technology has already changed the field forever. Just think of some of the early outsider artists, many of whom lived in rural settings. With the internet and the spread of technology, it has become harder and harder to be less aware of the world around you. Of course, many outsider artists have handicaps and disabilities, and so there are individuals who will remain somewhat removed from the information available on the internet, but at the same time, more and more people are calling their work “outsider art” since the term is becoming increasingly mainstream as a result of social media and technology. I think this is going to dramatically shift what we are going to consider outsider art as we move forward. I don’t think technology will destroy outsider art, but technology will definitely change the outsider art world, and all art worlds for that matter. I think, sometimes, that it is harder to be creative when there is so much information at our fingertips. However, maybe at the same time, people will find ways to use the internet and develop methods of employing technology to create new and unique works of art.

How would you describe your gallery’s approach to outsider art?

Scott Ogden: For me, when I am looking at art, there is a moment when something hits me about the work. I want to know what it is, where it has been, and the story behind it. That is when I know I’ve found a great piece. I love when something new catches my attention, and now, with Shrine, I am able to show the works that excite me in my gallery and, hopefully, interest other people in those works and that artist as well. In terms of who we show at Shrine, we break up our programming so we are featuring about fifty percent outsider art and fifty percent contemporary. Whether the work is outsider or contemporary, I try to show the work on the same playing field. For outsider art, we tend not to highlight the fact that what we are showing is by an “outsider”. Obviously, these artists have interesting personal stories and materials, but in the gallery the work itself has to be visually captivating as well. We find that the work resonate with the viewer and speak for themselves, independent of their story so the “outsider art” label is not something we have to over-qualify or promote ourselves.

Carl Hammer: In our gallery, we represent artists from many areas, both outsider and contemporary. All of our artists are happy to share the walls of the gallery with each other. We don't tend to differentiate between our artists when it comes to the kinds of shows we do, and we rarely use the term “outsider” in our billing or exhibitions. We feel they have attained the level of recognition and acceptance that they should and would expect to get if they were any other type of artist. And, as is the case with any artist, collectors can choose if they want to purchase the work or not. For us, we have found that the art collecting public is fully cognizant of outsider art and we have a very steady and faithful collectorship. But at the same time, no one comes to the Carl Hammer Gallery without knowing our history and our relationship with outsider art. We have been fortunate to be around for many years and represent some really significant outsider artists, like Bill Traylor, who have gone on to international success. I have seen how outsider art has changed over the years and have been able to be part of all that.

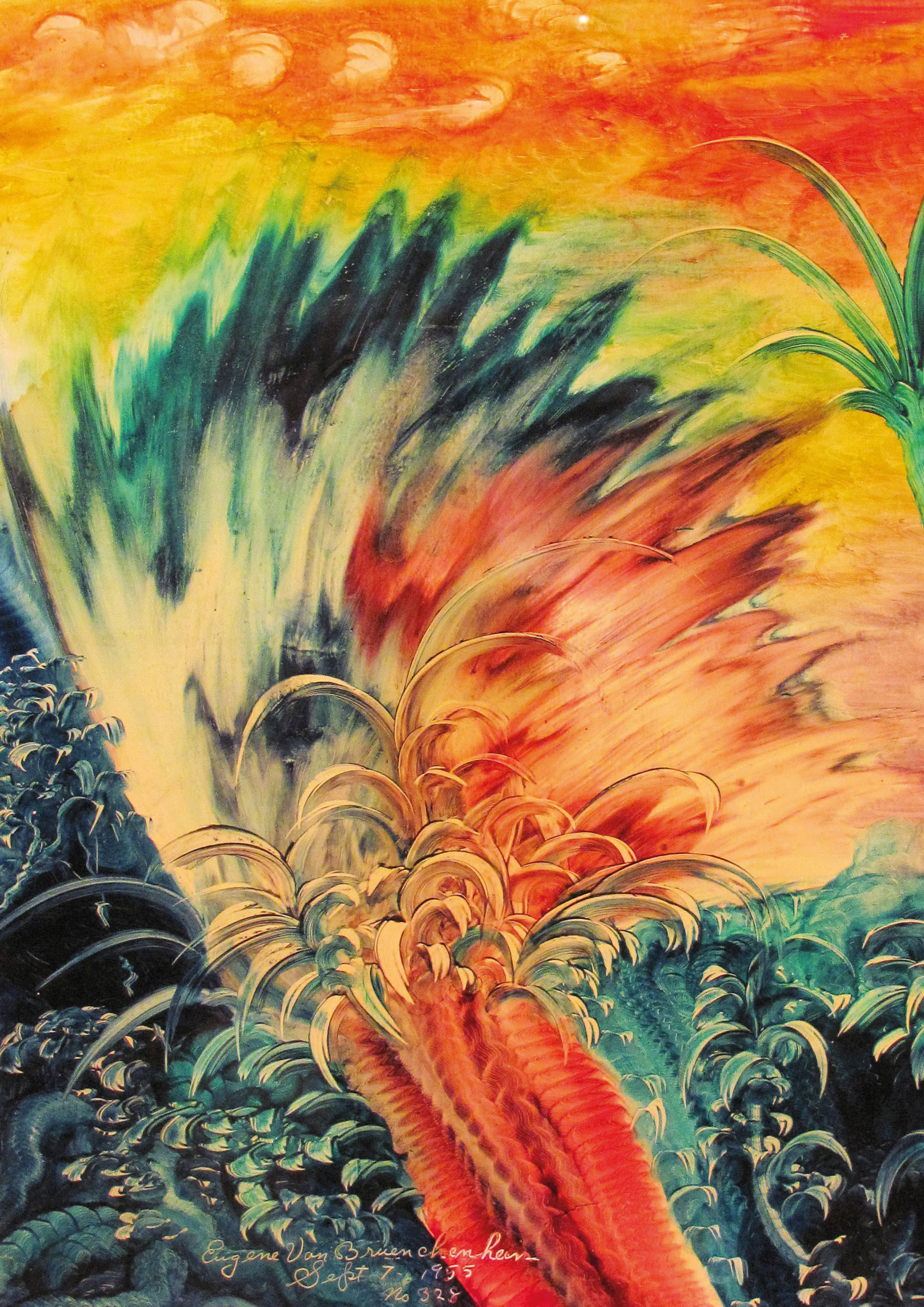
You are both participating in the Outsider Art Fair. How important are fairs for promoting outsider art?

Carl Hammer: We have done our fair share of fairs, both nationally and internationally, beginning initially with antique fairs and slowly becoming more involved with art fairs, but the Outsider Art Fair is unique. There is not another event quite like it and there is a certain level of focus to the show that makes it exceptional. It also gets a lot of press – it is *New York Times* art critic Roberta Smith’s favorite show, you know. All of that makes it truly exciting to participate at the fair and very year I feel like I have to attend so that I can be part of the collective voice that is put forth there.

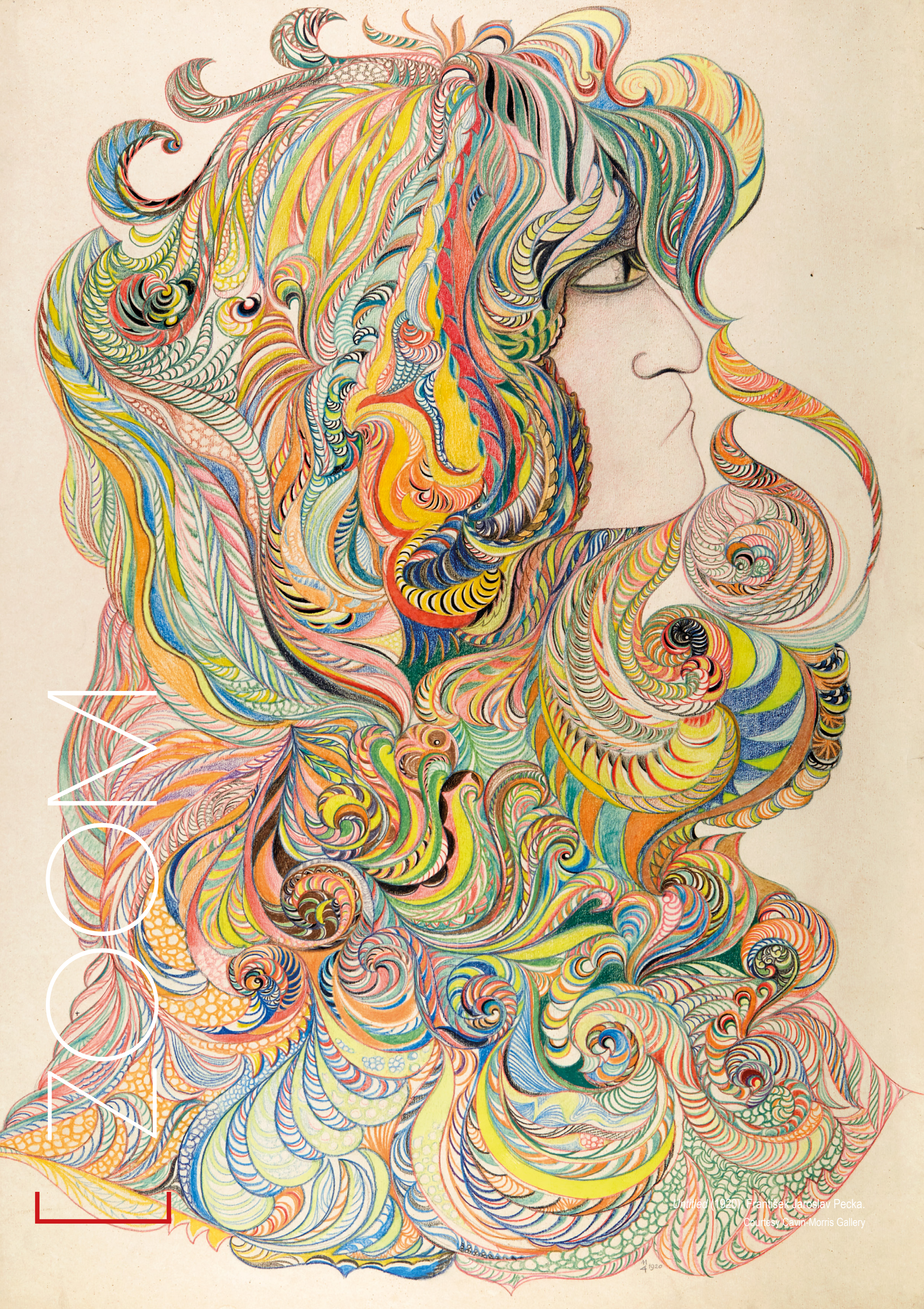
Scott Ogden: With Shine, we promote works through books, magazines, and on social media. But I still think that artwork is best seen in person, and the Outsider Art Fair is an incredible venue for making this work accessible and spreading interest in the field. It is such a different opportunity to experience works in person, to get close and really see the work for what it is. The fair draws an audience who is already aware of the field and invested in what you are showing, as well as who made it and what their story is. But it also opens up this world to more people and makes it possible for this work to be seen, collected, and shared.

Emelia Lehmann

No. 328 (detail, 1955), Eugene Von Bruenchenhein.
Courtesy Carl Hammer Gallery


Eugene Von Bruenchenhein
Sept 7 - 1955
No 328

ZOOM



Untitled (1920). František Jaroslav Pecka.
Courtesy Cavin-Morris Gallery

OUT OF THE ASHES

Originally associated with rehabilitative art-therapy programs for those with disabilities, outsider art in Japan has been aligned with public health and reform since its inception in the mid-19th century. Yet attitudes are changing, as Japan opens up to see the genre is much larger than previously imagined.

1940s – the world is at arms. Amidst the turmoil and devastation of bombings, casualties and fatalities, new ways of thinking emerge. In France, perhaps as a gesture of disillusionment against a society twisted by destruction, artist Jean Dubuffet famously shuns the principles and codes upheld by the established art scene and coins the phrase "art brut" (translated as "raw art"). Art by its very nature, Dubuffet believed, is supposed to "uproot us, to unhinge doors" – something that could not occur in the context of what he referred to as the dull, "hollow works" produced by and for mainstream taste.

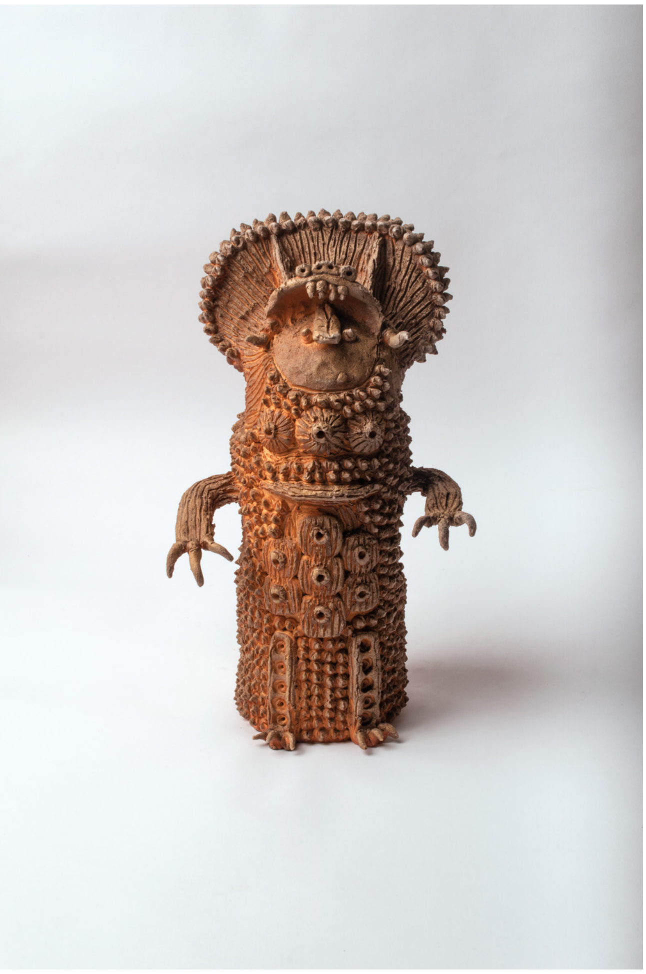
At the same point in time, on the other side of the world, the Japanese government officially establishes the Ministry of Health and Welfare, recognizing the right of all people to maintain the minimum standard of cultured living, and emphasizing the state's obligation to provide social welfare, social security and public health. The act triggers the establishment of a series of schools, programs and workshops that provide educational, boarding and medical facilities for individuals with disabilities. High on the list of activities are those associated with art, in acknowledgment of the therapeutic benefits of creative occupation. A policy of "nonintervention" in the creative process means that facilitators make materials available to participants but they do not tell their charges what to create or how to do so.

Over the following decades, an outpouring of raw, unfiltered artistic works is produced by patients across Japan, leading to the birth of the notion of art brut, or outsider art, for the country. Unlike Dubuffet's definition, however, outsider art in Japan is an attempt to reconcile those on the fringes of society with mainstream life, rather than a reaction against it. And with thanks to a continued commitment on the part of the Japanese government to this act of reconciliation, publicly funded art-therapy workshops thrive over the next 80 years to the point where, now, Japanese outsider art is as popularly revered by curators and coveted by collectors as its French cousin.

Several dealers at this year's Outsider Art Fair (OAF) will be showing works by some of the masters of Japanese outsider art. London-based online art business Jennifer Lauren Gallery, who usually exhibits via pop-up shows, returns to New York with works by the Japanese artists Masao Obata (colored-pencil drawings on corrugated cardboard) and Shinichi Sawada (ceramic creatures with spiky skins and horns). Tokyo-based Yukiko Koide Presents, a gallery whose director is a recognized authority in Japan's small but fast-evolving art brut/outsider field, will show drawings by Yuichiro Ukai – a young artist who packs his dense compositions with dinosaurs, skeletons, giant spiders, samurai, and Buddhist deities – alongside abstract, unglazed ceramic works by Hideaki Yoshikawa, who covers each piece with tiny dots, which are, in fact, the eyes of miniscule faces.

Although, as with all raw art, each artist's style and focus is totally independent of the next, dealers of Japanese outsider art are able to pick out certain aesthetics that make the genre especially attractive to collectors. "Though I don't want to generalize", comments Yukiko Kiode,

Untitled (1951), Shinichi Sawada.
Photo Ellie Walmsley. © Jennifer Lauren Gallery



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"I am personally intrigued by works created with meticulous handiwork. This may reflect a Japanese tradition that sophisticated craftsmanship is valued." Likewise Randall Morris, co-Director of Cavin-Morris Gallery, notices the influence of tradition on the artist he represents: "If there are commonalities it might be a deep influence by Japanese calligraphy", he states, as well as a "preoccupation with pop culture." Motifs work their way in from environment, childhood memory and cultural standards – though possibly from a more immediate source too.

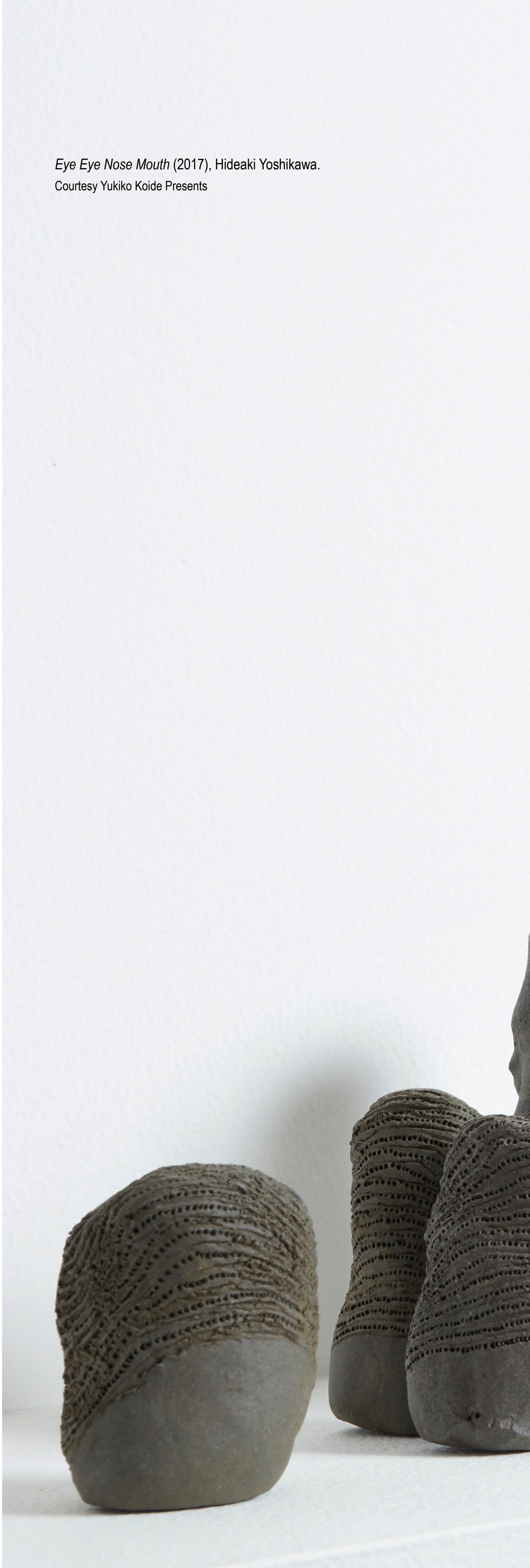
In the way that certain art schools form centers of genius for contemporary artists, so too do certain workshops lead the way for Japanese outsider art. Possibly the most renowned of these is the Shiga Prefectural Social Welfare Corporation, where both of Yukiko Kiode's artists (Ukai and Yoshikawa) took part in Yamanami Kobo, an innovative art-therapy workshop. One of the first prefectures in the country to implement programs that combine welfare and the arts, Shiga has spawned a number of outsider artists who are now household names for collectors and institutions – thanks partly to the exhibition program of its very own Borderless Art Museum NO-MA, which opened in 2004.

Conceived as a place where the line between the world of the able-bodied and the disabled, and between social welfare and art, would dissolve, the Borderless Art Museum NO-MA has been especially responsible for bringing Japanese outsider art into public consciousness, encouraging visitors to acknowledge and experience the expressive power that all people share by exhibiting outsider art and contemporary art alongside each other. Yoshiko Hata, the museum's Art Director, believes that the genre of outsider art is more relatable than contemporary art, and therefore more impactful, for the majority of visitors: "The world of [contemporary] art is marked by a pull between the artists, who wish to create or express something new, and the audience, who wish to be moved by the work of art. Art brut is different, however. Many of the works created by individuals with disabilities express motifs from the deepest recesses of their minds, including thoughts that circle around in their heads and images that re-play themselves. Maybe this is why art brut has the power to move people so profoundly."

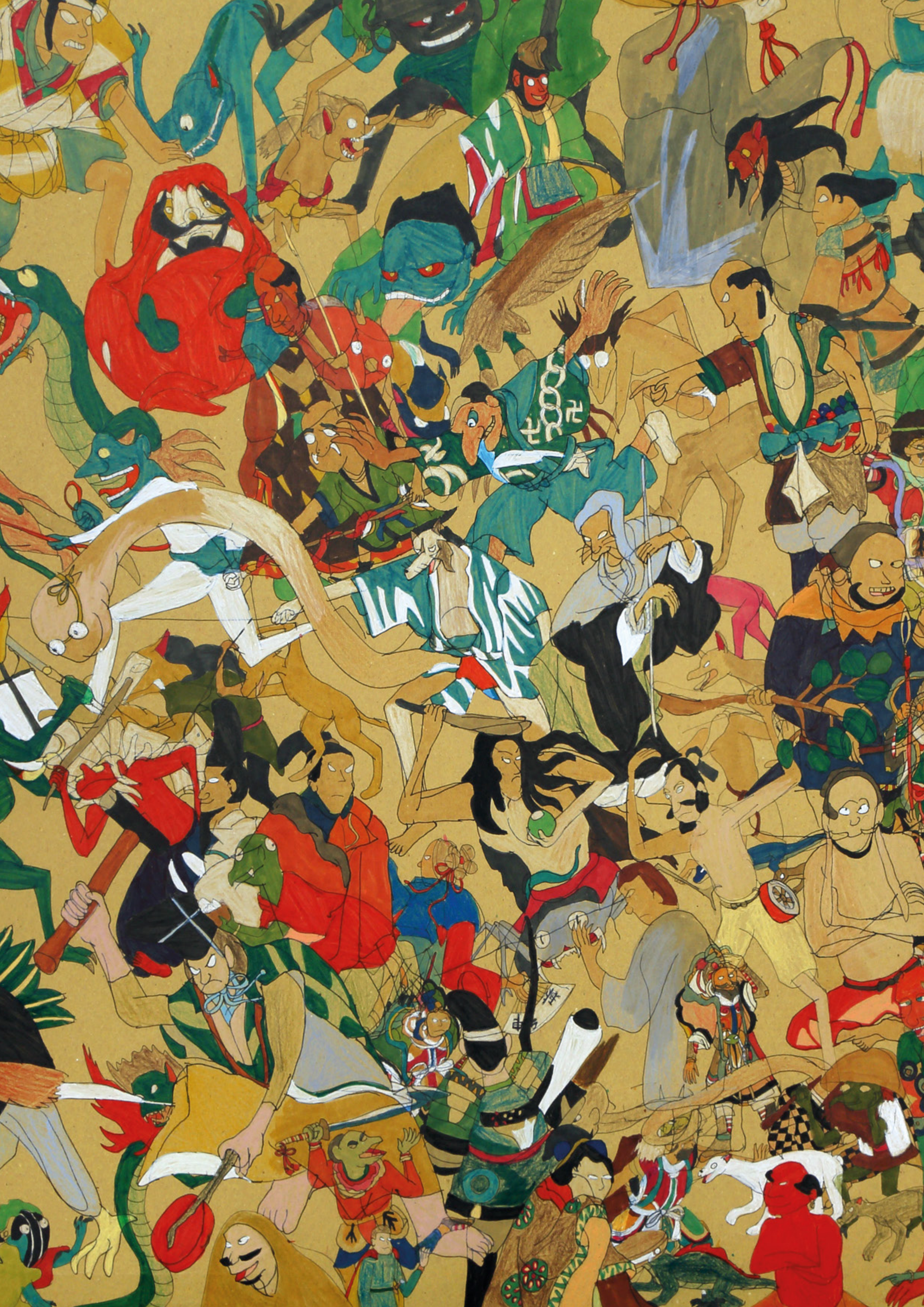
And move people it certainly did, via a series of exhibitions that spread around the world and opened awareness of the genre up to a global audience. The beginnings of this may be traced back to 2006, when, together with the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art in Kobe, NO-MA began collaborating with the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, leading to the group exhibition "JAPON" in 2008. The exhibition brought together twelve self-taught Japanese artists, including Shinichi Sawada, Masao Obata and Takashi Shuji. A major donation of a hundred works, presented as part of this exhibition, was made to the Collection de l'Art Brut, marking the beginning of the West's fascination with Japanese outsider art.

While on display in Switzerland, the works presented in JAPON also caught the attention of the director of the Halle Saint Pierre Museum in Paris, resulting in another collaboration from 2010-2011, which brought 800 pieces of work by 63 Japanese artists to France. Two years later, in 2013, a major exhibition at the Wellcome Collection in London, titled "Souzou" and curated by Shamita Sharmacharja, carried the genre even further west. An adaptation of an earlier exhibition held at Het Dolhuys, the Museum of Psychiatry, in Haarlem, Holland, the word "Souzou" translates to either "creation" or "imagination" depending on which kanji are used to write it. In the words of curator Sharmacharja, the exhibition aimed to express that, "though many any of the works on view… [came] from artists who had participated in art-therapy programs, [it was] not to say that in Japan only such individuals produce outsider art." More than 300 works made by 46 artists were presented, with mediums ranging from paintings to drawings, sculptures, textiles and ceramics.

But perhaps the biggest turning point for Art Brut was the 2013 Venice Biennale, when pavilion after pavilion chose to display sculptures and



Eye Eye Nose Mouth (2017), Hideaki Yoshikawa.
Courtesy Yukiko Koide Presents

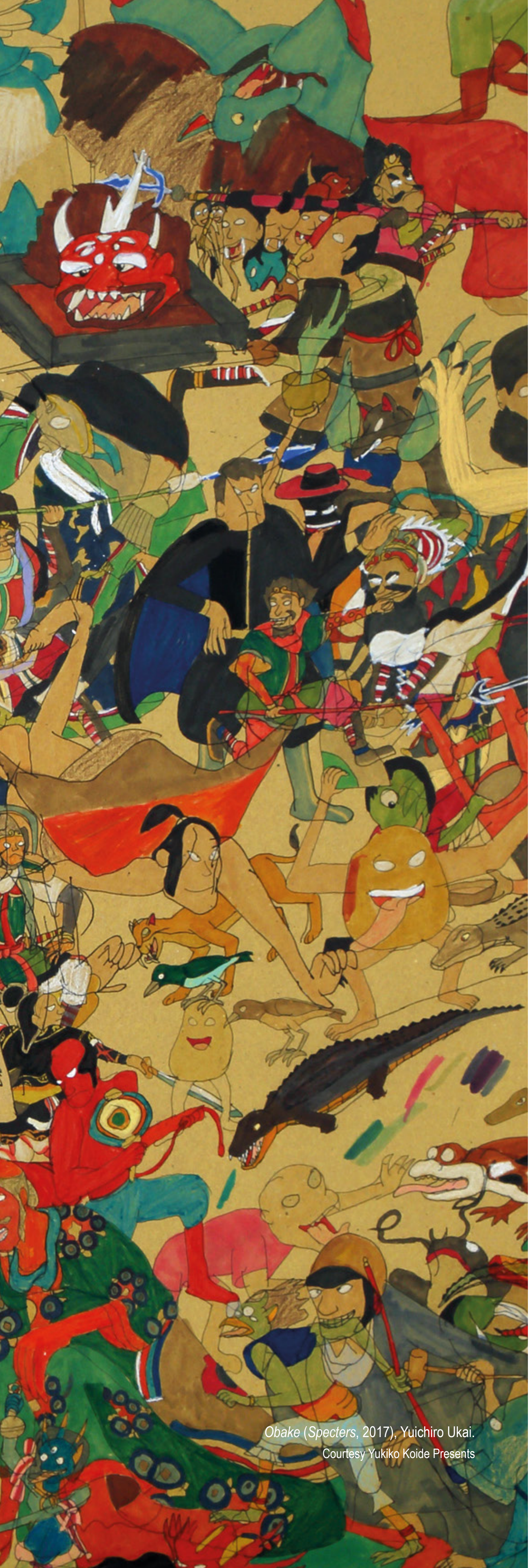


paintings that held no formal relationship to the history of art. British art critic Will Gompertz defined the event as “the moment where the outsiders found they [had] been invited to the most glamorous party being held in the most beautiful city in the Adriatic. And ironically, in the process, [became] part of the global art market.” Collectors started to grapple for works by the masters of art brut – ceramicist Shinichi Sawada’s being one artist whose work became particularly coveted from this point on.

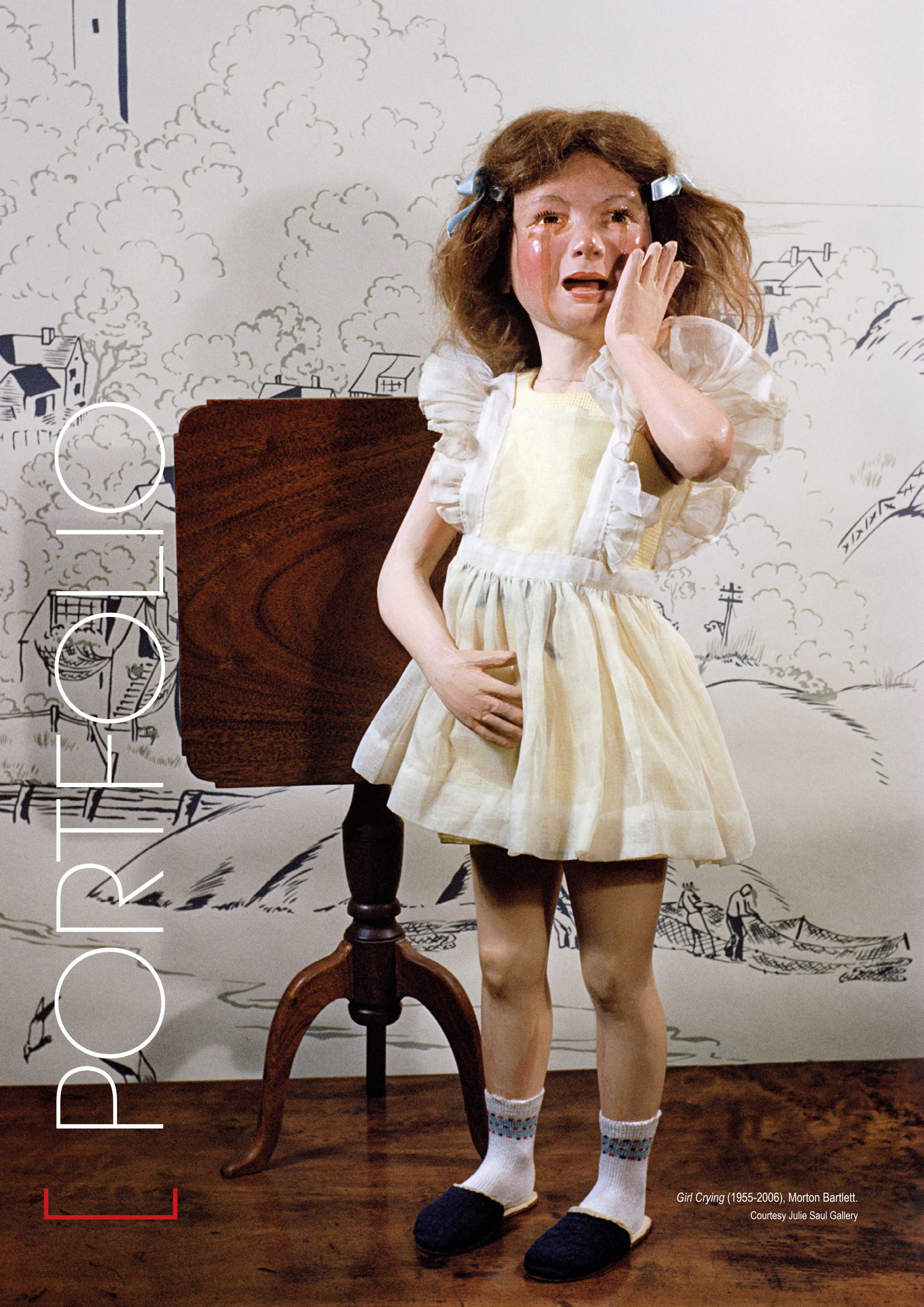
The market for the genre remains predominantly western. Jennifer Gilbert, of Jennifer Laurent Gallery, admits that, although there is a market for outsider art in Japan, in her opinion “the market for it is wider both in Europe and America.” Yukiko Kioke, however, goes further by stating outright that the market for Japanese art brut does not lie in Japan, and instead support for the encouragement of the genre comes at an official level. “In Europe, there are individual collectors who are interested in works by certain artists; in Japan, that is not the way – no individual collectors, but more and more grants come from the government for exhibition and events of ‘Japanese Art Brut’.” The benefit of receiving such committed state support is that protection comes with it: in 2005, the nonprofit organization Haretari Kumottari was established, also in Shiga. Its mission: to identify all the self-taught art-makers who are affiliated with social-welfare organizations in Japan, protect their creative rights and help conserve their works. Therefore any disquiet around the idea of commercial galleries profiteering from artists who create purely for the act of creating – with no desire to enter into a marketplace – are happily assuaged, with numerous systems to protect their creative and economic wellbeing.

Yet, it is still only really the beginning of the journey for Japanese art brut. In Japan, works made by self-taught artists (those who have not participated in state-funded programs) have only recently begun to be shown publicly under the “art brut” label, illustrating that there is still some way to go for the genre to be accepted as part of the commercial art world there. Randall Morris of Cavin-Morris Gallery in New York believes that “Japan’s experience with art brut is relatively recent in terms of the rest of the world”, and that the field is only just starting to open up as more “non-workshop artists like Nishikawa and M’onma are being noticed.” There is work still to be done in Europe and America too. “We are the only gallery right now in the US that regularly shows and represents Japanese art brut”, states Morris. “The Halle Saint Pierre exhibitions have introduced many people to the field and given support to the recognition of this Japanese body of work. The US and Paris are very influential on the rest of the field, partially because of the Outsider Art Fair which enables people to see and handle the work up close. As the Japanese open the work up to the rest of the world this influence will grow.” Yukiko Kioke also acknowledges the importance of Paris in furthering appreciation of the genre worldwide: “Japanese people have a long history of worshiping Paris as the world capital of culture. So, the fact that someone’s work is exhibited in Paris holds merit back in Japan. I am certain that the exhibitions in Paris have raised the recognition of the works by people with disabilities. This has ignited a kind of Japanese art brut ‘boom’.”

The boom is certainly set to grow, with two blockbuster exhibitions currently taking place in Paris – “Japan’s Art Brut, Another Look” at the Collection de l’Art Brut Lausanne, until April 2019; and “Art Brut Japonais II” at La Halle Saint Pierre until March 2019 – not to mention other smaller, commercial exhibitions at galleries such as Cavin-Morris, Yokiko Kioke Presents and Atsuko Barouh. “Between Halle Saint Pierre, and the Collection de l’art Brut in Lausanne it is seen now how rich the world of Japanese Art Brut is”, states Morris. “This is what we also do in the US.” And as far as public response to these exhibitions is predicted to go, the outlook is positive. “We believe that in today’s fast-paced society, people are looking for an immovable, and yet unyielding strength”, remarks Yoshiko Hata, Art Director of the Borderless Museum NO-MA. “Despite the fact that their works are not made with any audience in mind, [outsider art] has the endless capacity to move us and stir our souls.” **Laura Archer**


Obake (*Specters*, 2017), Yuichiro Ukai.
Courtesy Yukiko Koide Presents

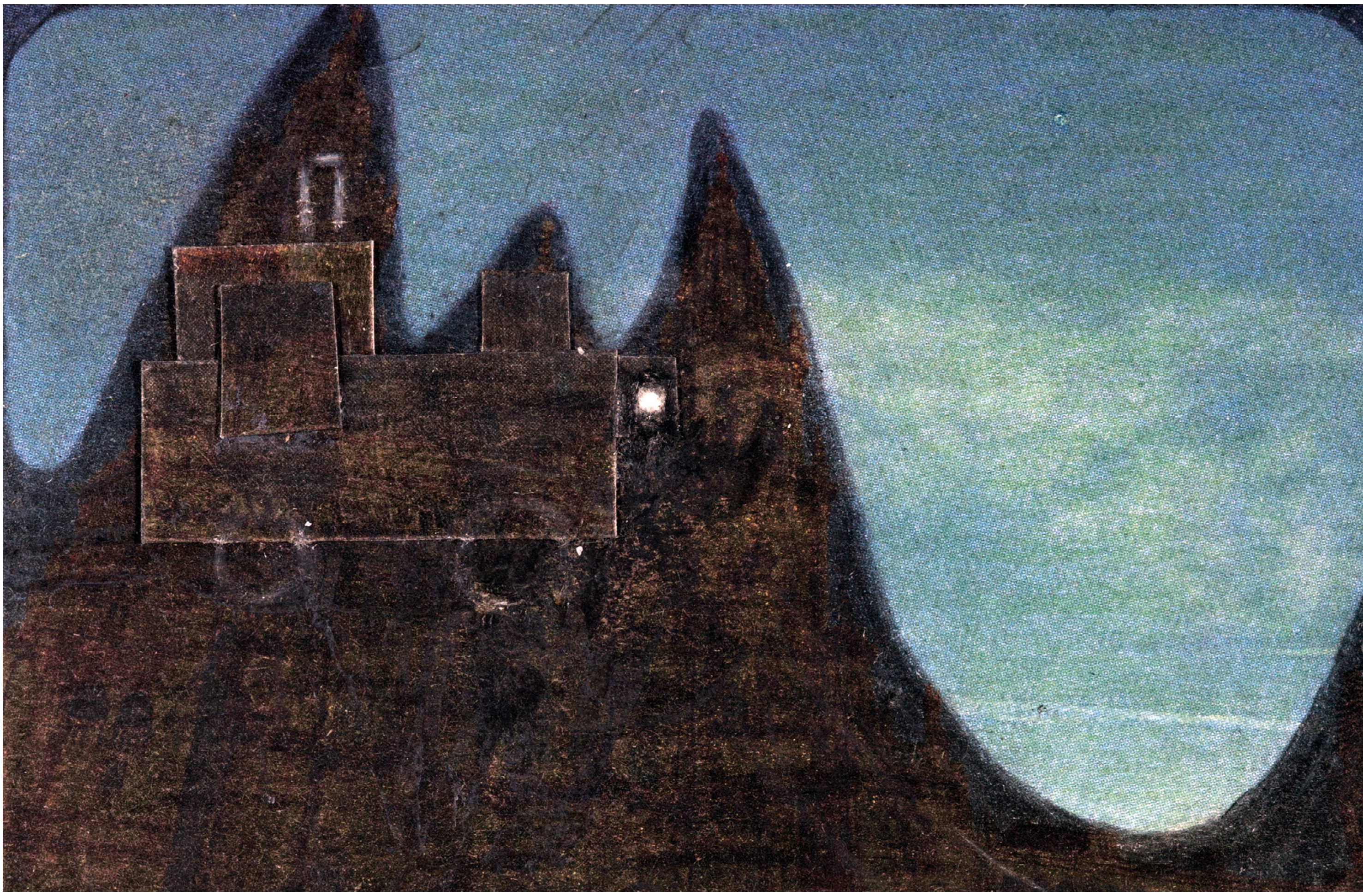
PORTFOLIO



Girl Crying (1955-2006), Morton Bartlett.
Courtesy Julie Saul Gallery

THE EYE OF THE DEALER

Before business there was passion. Six exhibitors from the Outsider Art Fair share with us their secret connexions with unique artworks from their personal collection. Open your eyes.



Untitled (2015), Leopold Strobl.
Courtesy Gugging

« This work by Leopold Strobl was presented at his first show in March 2016 at the Gugging gallery. I felt in love with it right away. The forms remind me of the mountains in Austria, where I grew up, and are surreal, designed with the collage of a locomotive, that is not easy to recognize at first sight. I love that little "secret" of this work and thought: "If it's still there at the end of the show, I will buy it". It was still there and now I enjoy looking at it every day.

Nina Katschnig, Gugging

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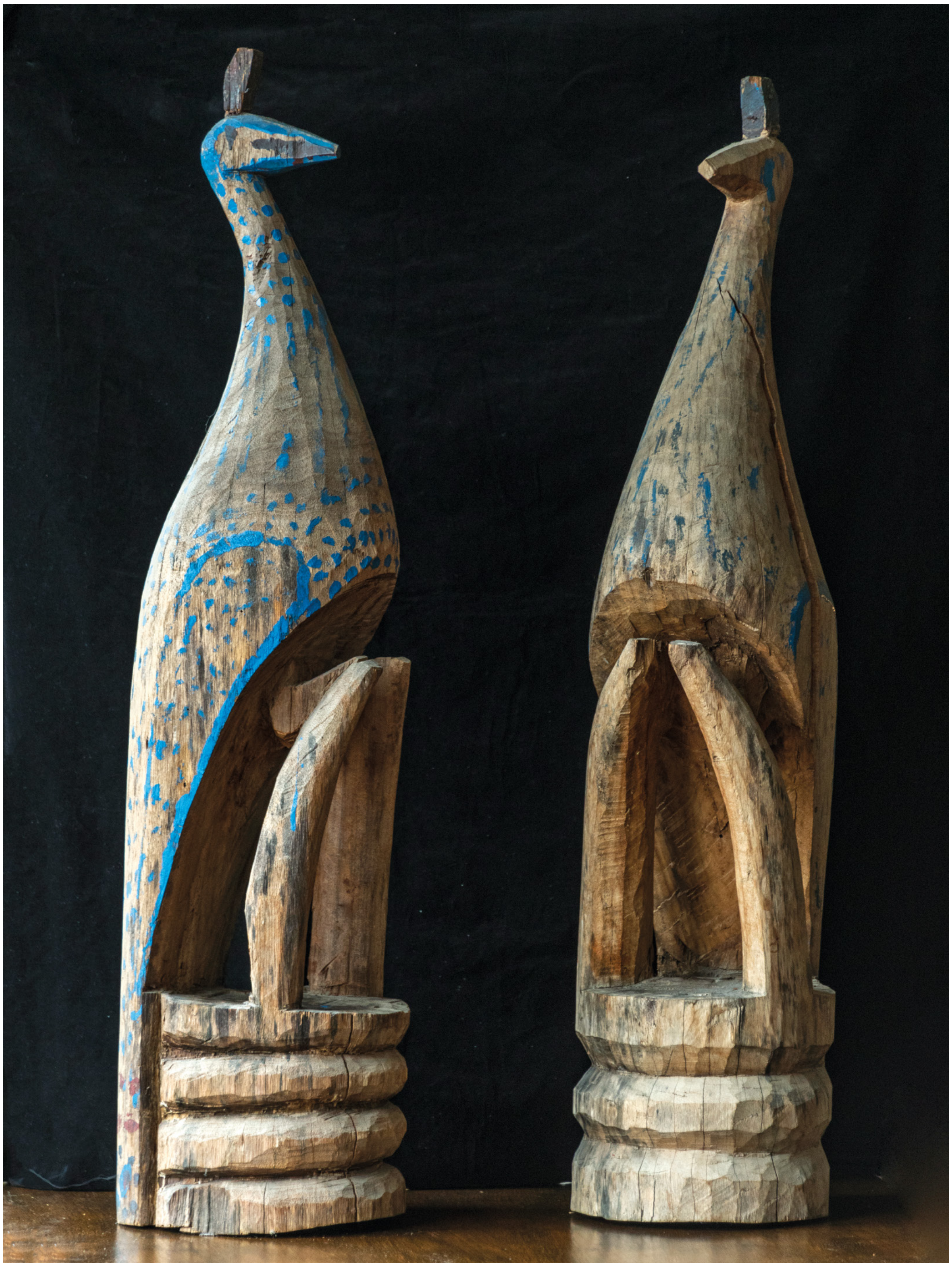


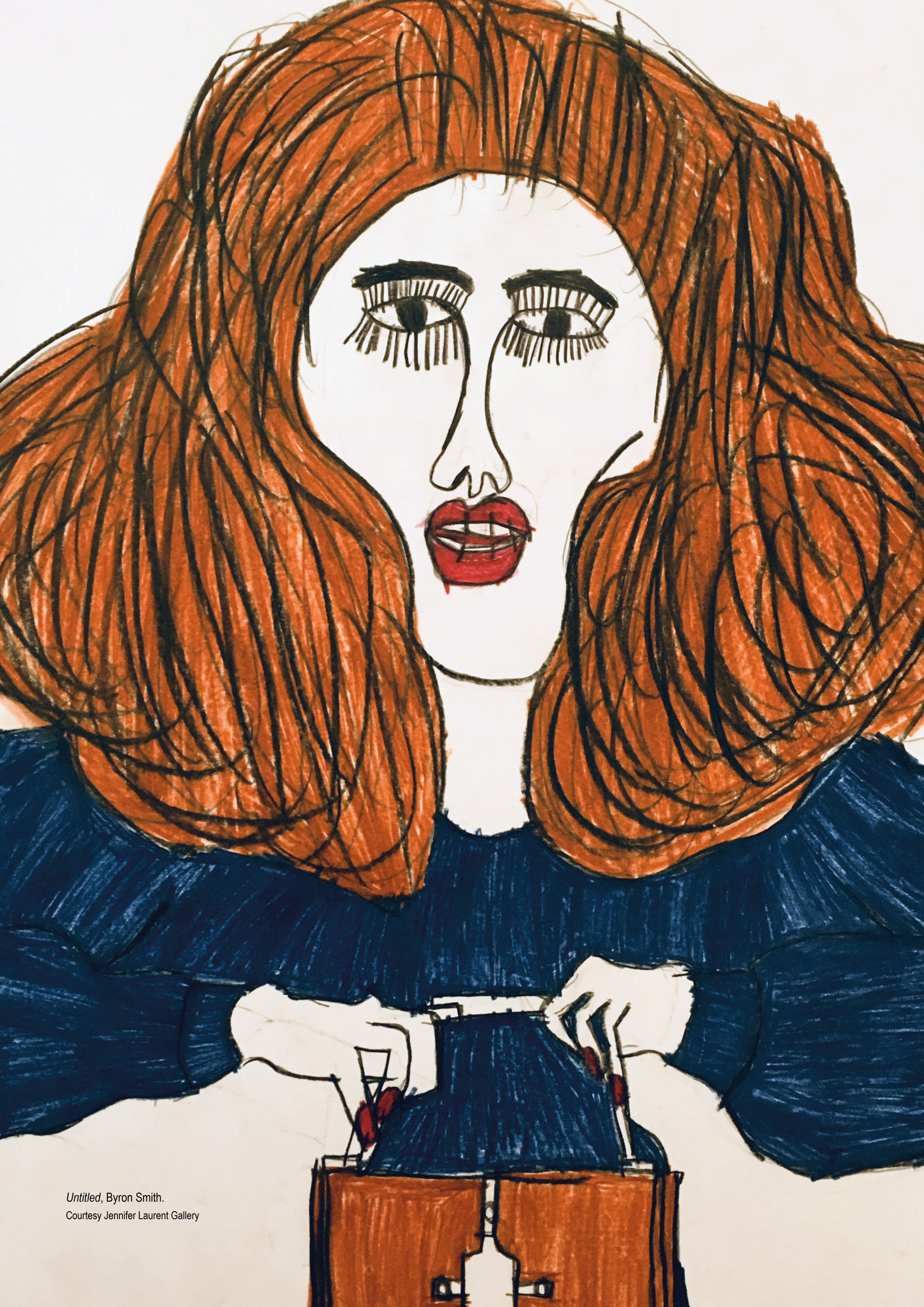
Funerary Guardians (*Peacocks*, c.1960).
Courtesy Mariposa Unusual Arts

« I discovered these pieces by accident while in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2000 and was stunned by their beauty. They are funerary guardian sculptures made by a central Vietnam highland population (Gia Rai) known for their complex burials around 1950. These sculptures, mounted on tall poles, watch over the dead at elaborate grave sites. Peacocks perched on elephant tusks are a special motif. After the funeral ceremony the graves are ritually abandoned to allow both the living and the dead to move on. The site is eventually reclaimed by nature, and the sculpted images are left to disintegrate.

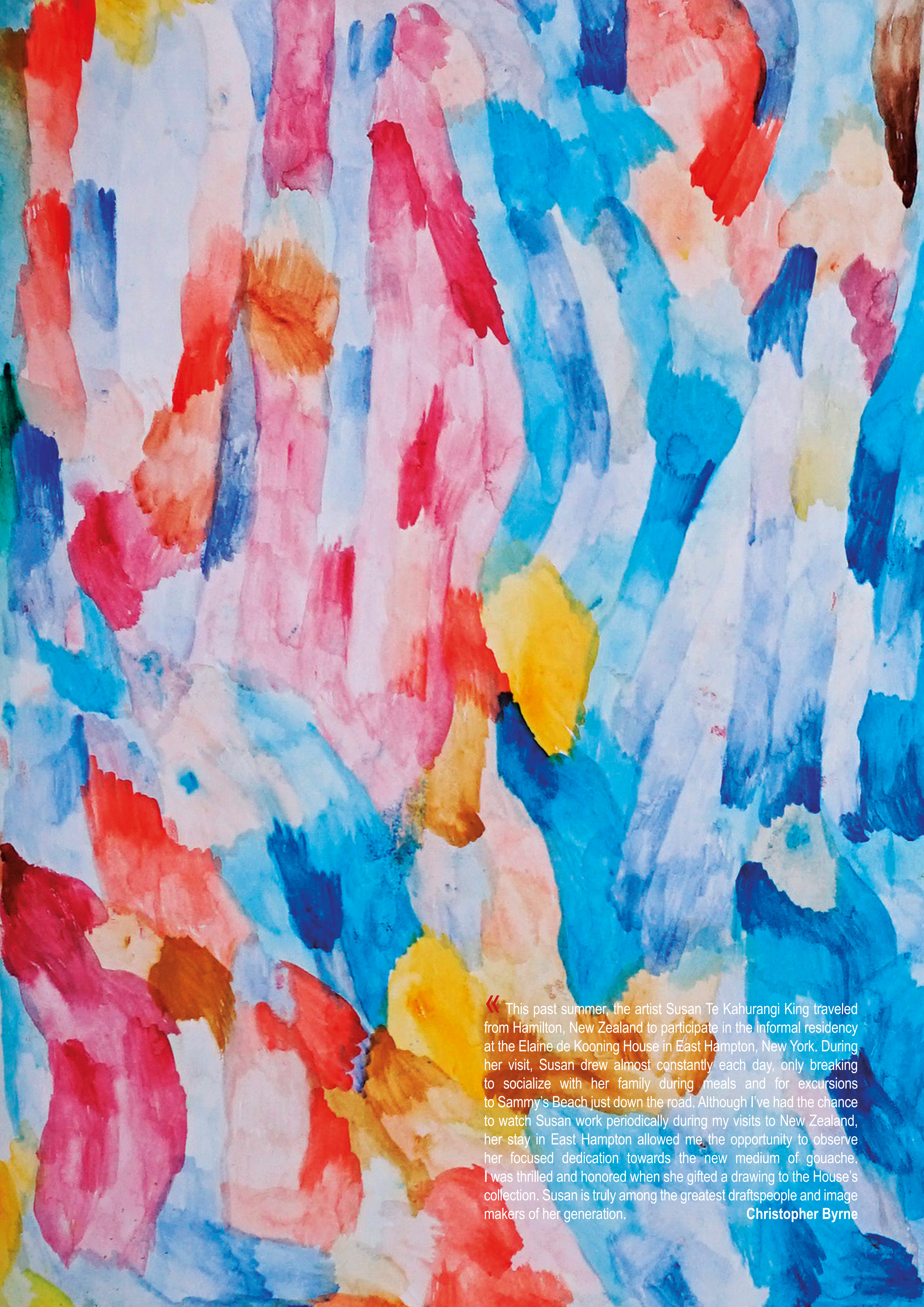
Beate Echols, Mariposa Unusual Arts

« This piece by Byron Smith from LAND Gallery in Brooklyn is one of my most favored possessions. Not only is it the only colorful artwork that I own, but I also think it looks a little like me – even though it's not! Until earlier this year I had been following LAND Gallery on Instagram and finally got to visit in January 2018 to meet the artists and see their studio. To me Byron has a unique style of drawing women, with their eyelashes being one of the focus points and their poses being the other. Long may Byron continue his creativity!

Jennifer Gilbert, Jennifer Laurent Gallery

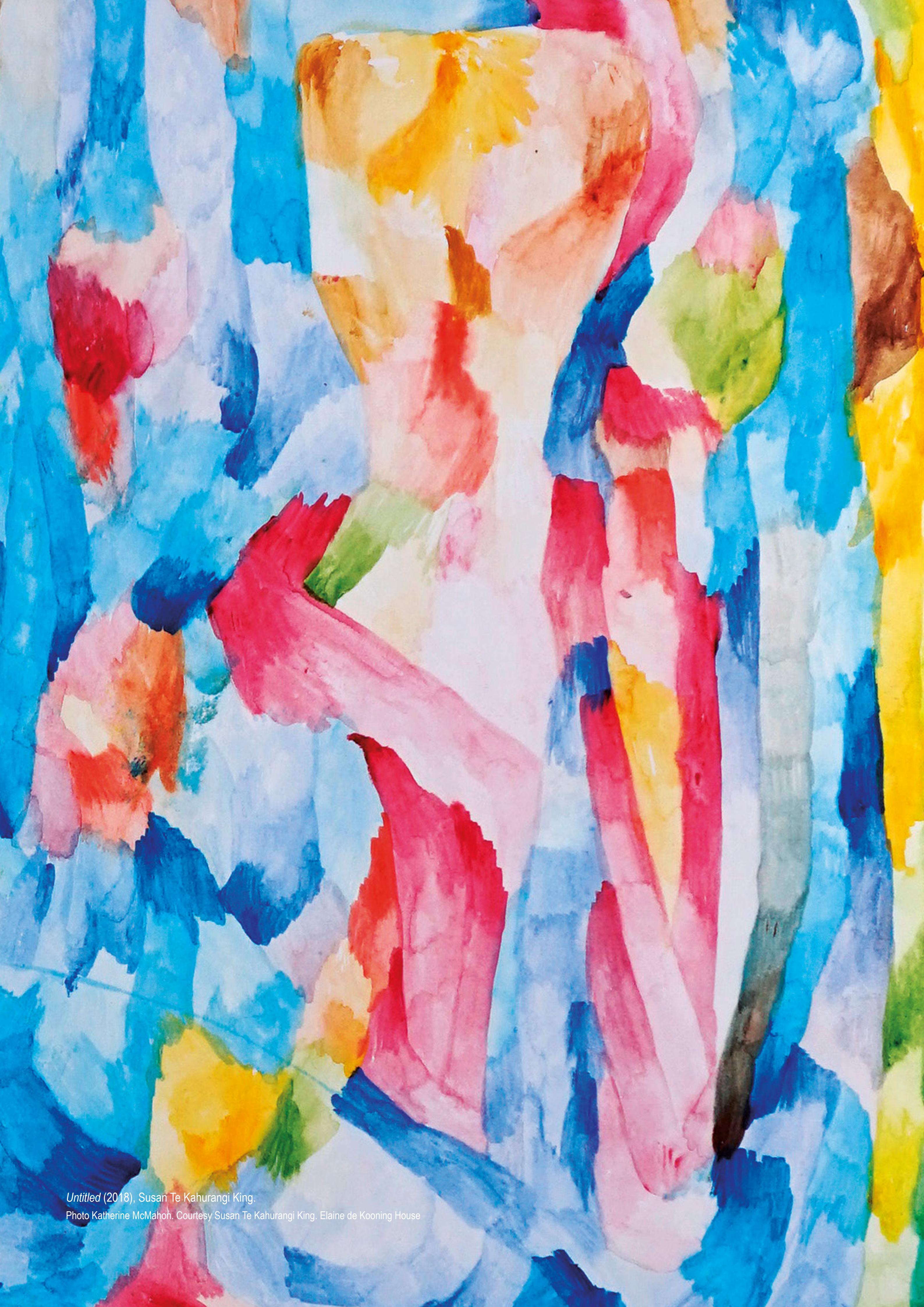


Untitled, Byron Smith.
Courtesy Jennifer Laurent Gallery



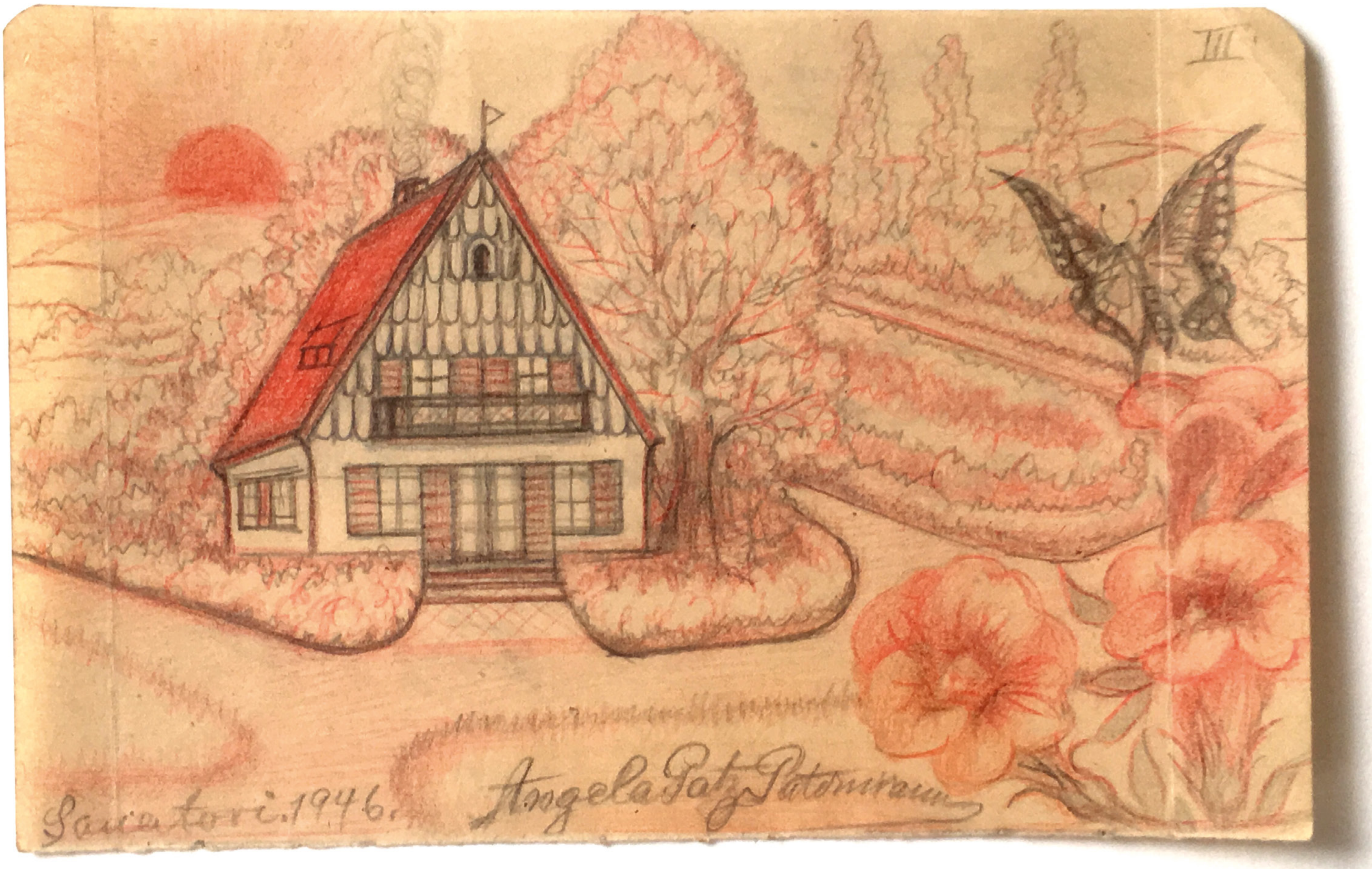
« This past summer, the artist Susan Te Kahurangi King traveled from Hamilton, New Zealand to participate in the informal residency at the Elaine de Kooning House in East Hampton, New York. During her visit, Susan drew almost constantly each day, only breaking to socialize with her family during meals and for excursions to Sammy's Beach just down the road. Although I've had the chance to watch Susan work periodically during my visits to New Zealand, her stay in East Hampton allowed me the opportunity to observe her focused dedication towards the new medium of gouache. I was thrilled and honored when she gifted a drawing to the House's collection. Susan is truly among the greatest draftspeople and image makers of her generation.

Christopher Byrne



Untitled (2018), Susan Te Kahurangi King.

Photo Katherine McMahon. Courtesy Susan Te Kahurangi King. Elaine de Kooning House



Untitled (c.1944), Angelika.
Courtesy Henry Boxer

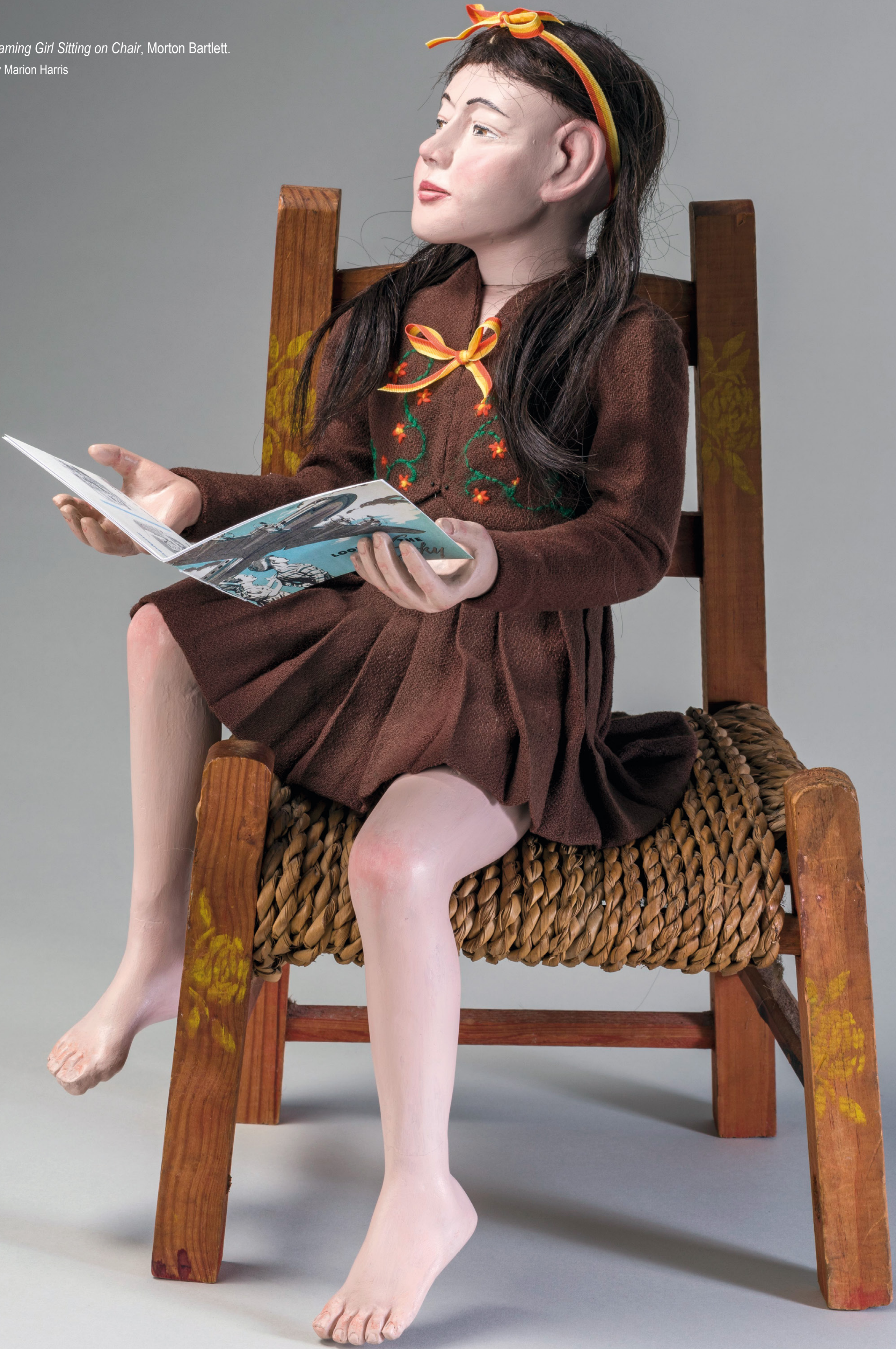
« These sensitive, exquisitely drawn treasures, were produced in a Berlin Sanatorium in the midst of the apocalyptic events of the last two years of World War II. It is though the artist had escaped to another place to bring back images and mementos from another far less troubled and different world. **Henry Boxer**

« The Morton Bartlett estate was purchased by me 25 years ago. Unknown at the the time, and now iconic, since their discovery all 15 Morton Bartlett dolls have been sold and are in museum or private collections. Except this one, hitherto undiscovered, of *Daydreaming Girl Sitting on Chair*. It is now on loan to American Visionary Art Museum and is included in their Art of Parenting exhibit which continues until September 2019. Daydreaming Girl will be available for sale when exhibition ends.

Nina Katschnig, Gugging

Daydreaming Girl Sitting on Chair, Morton Bartlett.

Courtesy Marion Harris



FOCUS

Phyllis Kind (c.1984).
Courtesy Phyllis Kind Collection

THE POWER OF INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIVITY

Art dealer Phyllis Kind has shaped the way Americans view, collect and support outsider artists like no other. In a career spanning more than 40 years, her galleries in Chicago and New York (from 1967 to 2009) supported taught and self-taught artists who “have developed distinct vocabularies of form” and thereby created a market for works that did and do not fit easily into art-historical categories.

In our fast-paced world, commercial galleries close all too often, their disappearance frequently going unnoticed and their endeavours all too quickly forgotten, no matter their passion or influence. When Phyllis Kind Gallery closed its doors ten years ago in 2009, her departure from the art world was planned carefully. At the age of 75, after decades fighting for artists she believed deserved exposure, she retired for health reasons and took the unusual step to close her gallery down. Although her retreat then was mainly observed and commented on by a close group of friends and supporters, her death in 2018 has finally started to shine greater light on the life and work of an exceptional and visionary dealer who in the words of Elsa Longhauser, director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, opened up the art world to a “whole new field” of art.

“Why would I want to run a store”

Trained as a scientist and working as a school teacher first in New York and later on in Chicago, Phyllis Barbara Cobin encountered art at the outset mainly through her husband, the art historian Joshua Kind. Cobin had met Kind as a student and married him at the age of 23. Having relocated to Chicago to accommodate his university teaching posts allowed her to attain a Masters in English Literature which, unfortunately, did not help her stave off being bored with life, as she once put it. On the suggestion of her husband, they opened a gallery together with the name Pro Grafica Arte on a third-floor space on Ontario Street in Chicago in 1967. The original intention was to sell Old Master Prints, a collecting focus of the couple as well as within the art historical expertise of her husband – but things took off in a new direction very quickly.

The late 1960s in Chicago were fertile ground for young artists trying out different things. One such group, including artists such as Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Roger Brown, Christina Ramberg and Karl Wirsum, later became known as the Chicago Imagists. Their visceral, intense styles with vivid colors and their innovative creative spirit left their imprint on the young Kind, who got more and more involved in the contemporary art scene, especially by visiting the Hyde Park Art Center where many of those artists had shows. This exposure created a sensitivity to the explosive societal context in the US at that time, shaped by war, violence and protest. It comes as no surprise that her gallery is listed as the lender of works on paper by artists such as Ben Mahmoud and Robert Andrew Parker in the seminal exhibition “Violence in Recent American Art” that took place in the autumn of 1968 at the MCA in Chicago. Her support for artists from a new generation with a potency to develop an alternative to mainstream Pop Art as well a Post-Minimalism enabled these artists to develop their work and be seen first in Chicago and then beyond.

ZOOM

Tribute

Art critic, art historian and curator Edward Gomez has been commissioned by the directors of the Outsider Art Fair to curate a special memorial tribute exhibition to honor the late art dealer Phyllis Kind. The exhibition will comprise about 20 works from self-taught as well as professional artists Kind was affiliated with. Works by artists such as Adolf Wölfli, Martín Ramírez and Domenico Zindato, sourced carefully from Kind’s own collection as well as private and institutional loans will be enriched by previously unknown photographic archival material and other printed matter from the Roger Brown Study Center of the Art Institute of Chicago. Gomez, himself an expert in outsider art has a unique insight into Kind, having known her well since the 1980s. His exhibition promises to bring to life Phyllis Kind’s unique interests, influence, and her legacy.

Phyllis Kind

Kind once stated, “I look for a strong, original vocabulary of form and for evidence that the artists are making art not because they might want to but instead because they have to.” After giving space to some of the more interesting painters from the Imagists group such as Jim Nutt and Roger Brown, the gallerist was quickly drawn to the innovative creativity expressed in works by outsider artists who came to public awareness in the US in the early 1970s. This was also the period in which the couple divorced with Kind raising four children as well as running her gallery in Chicago – with her children helping her regularly as she once pointed out in an interview. 1975 saw the expansion to a second gallery in her home town of New York at a space in Spring Street in Soho where she first introduced Chicago artists such as Ed Paschke (1939-2004) and Roger Brown to New York audiences.

“The art of necessity”

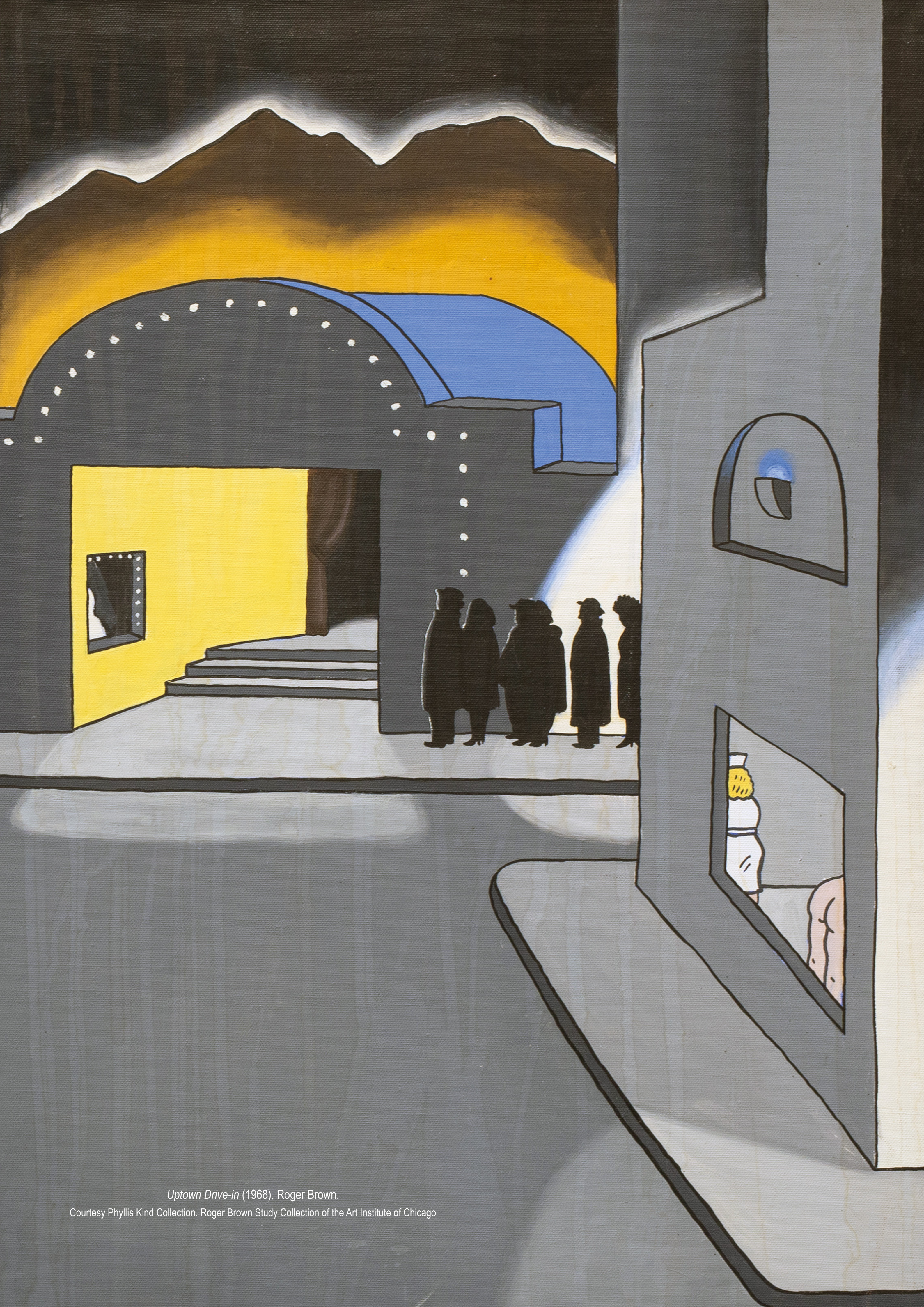
The period of the mid 1970s to the late 2000s really marked the phase of the unstoppable force of Phyllis Kind as a dealer and a person. Her gallery developed a significant influence especially in the promotion of outsider art. Now operating under the name of Phyllis Kind Gallery she staged not only solo shows by American artists such as Henry Darger and Martín Ramírez but also introduced the great European visionaries in the field to American audiences. Kind was the first American gallerist to introduce the Swiss Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930) in the USA. According to art critic Peter Schjeldahl she was exhibiting what he calls the “Big Three of twentieth-century outsiders”. From the start, her biggest contribution was to the field of outsider art. Through the artist Jim Nutt she discovered the Mexican born artist Martín Ramírez (1895-1963), who created the majority of his works while in a mental hospital near Sacramento, although only after his death in 1963. Together with Nutt and his wife, they bought 300 drawings by the artist, whose work she would then show in depth in numerous exhibitions. She discovered the work of Joseph Yoakum (1890-1972) while he produced landscapes and especially mountain drawings on the streets of Chicago’s South Side having worked as a coal miner. And in 1972, she mounted her first group show of outsider art under the title “The Artless Artist: Contemporary ‘Naïve’ Works”. As a pioneer, she not only helped found and exhibit at the first Outsider Art Fair held in New York since 1993, but hosted a symposium at her gallery which was visited by 200 people in the first year of the fair, always being keen to enhance the knowledge of people about outsider art.

“Phyllis, no shrinking violet, didn’t blink – she never blinked.”

1983 was the year the gallery relocated to a ground floor space on Greene Street, still remaining loyal to the heart of the New York art scene in Soho. It was only in 2006, three years before her gallery’s closure that she followed the trend and moved to Chelsea. Frequent exhibition reviews in art magazines such as *Art in America* and *Artforum* through the 1980s and 1990s are testimony to the quality of her exhibition program which never stood still. While being loyal to her stable of artists, Kind always introduced new artists and art forms to her clients and visitors, ranging from Russian dissident art to Indian Folk Art and Textiles.

Phyllis Kind shaped the outsider art scene in the US like no one else. The art dealer, who died early in 2018 at the age of 85, will forever be fondly remembered not only by her clients and artists she was working with, but also by the wider arts community in the field of outsider art and beyond. In his obituary for Hyperallergic, New York critic Jerry Saltz remembers the gallerist in a very personal way, sharing his memories of her and giving us a glance of not only the passion and fierce of the art dealer, but also the warm-heartedness and the generosity of the person Phyllis Kind. And let’s not forget, in an age of again a heightened awareness of the role and position of women in the art world, she should also be remembered as a strong-willed character whose life history is also one of emancipation and independence. It is time her legacy is now being honored with a curated memorial stand at this year’s Outsider Art Fair.

Stephanie Dieckvoss



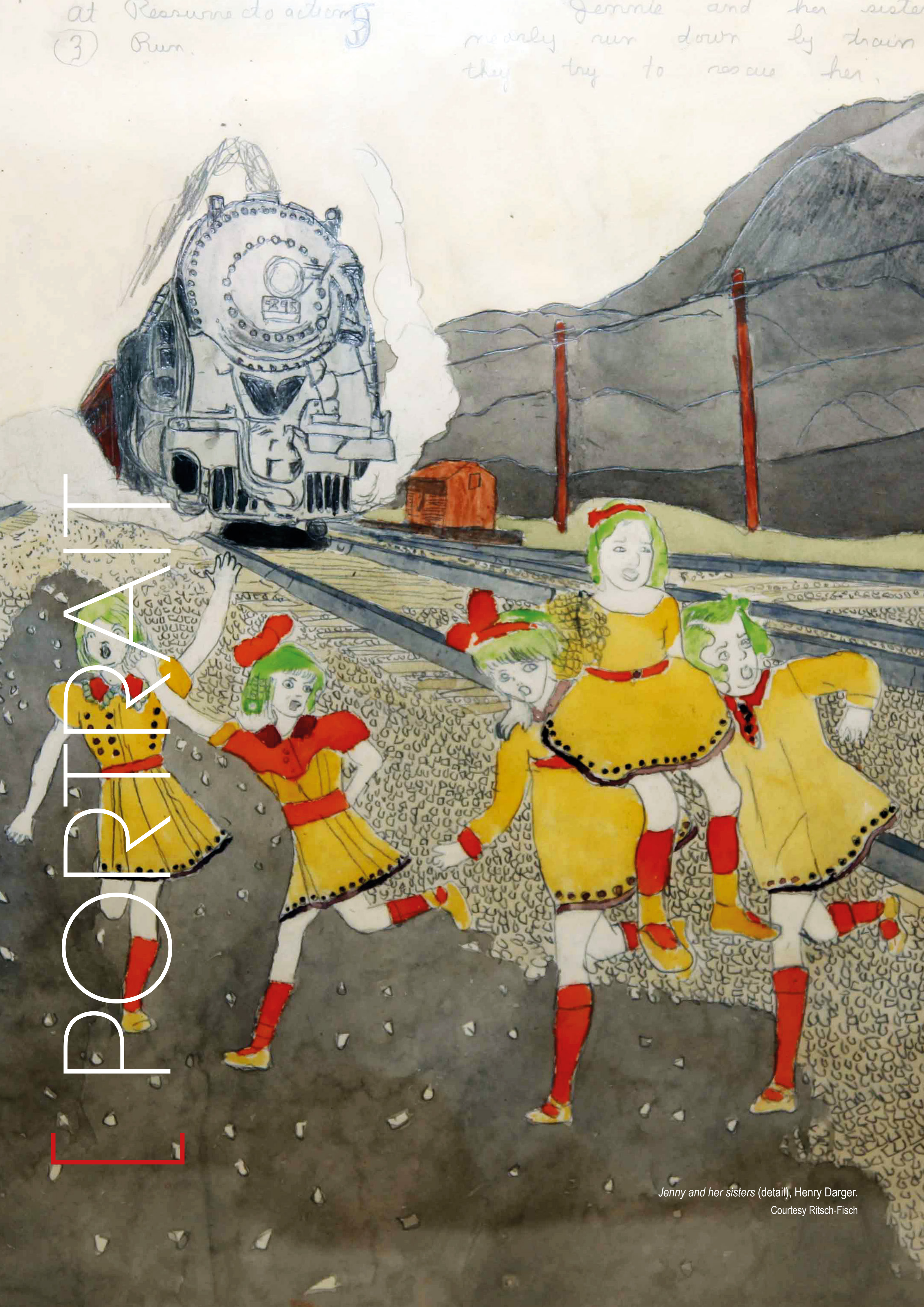
Uptown Drive-in (1968), Roger Brown.

Courtesy Phyllis Kind Collection. Roger Brown Study Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago

Phyllis Kind (1984).

Courtesy Phyllis Kind Collection

PORTRAIT


at Reasume to action
(3) Run
3
Jennie and her siste
nearly run down by train
they try to rescue her.
295

Jenny and her sisters (detail), Henry Darger.
Courtesy Ritsch-Fisch

A WORLD WITHIN A ROOM

The visionary artist and writer Henry Darger (1892-1973) is recognised today as one of the most celebrated outsider artists and one of the few whose work has secured him a firm place in the art historical canon of 20th century art.

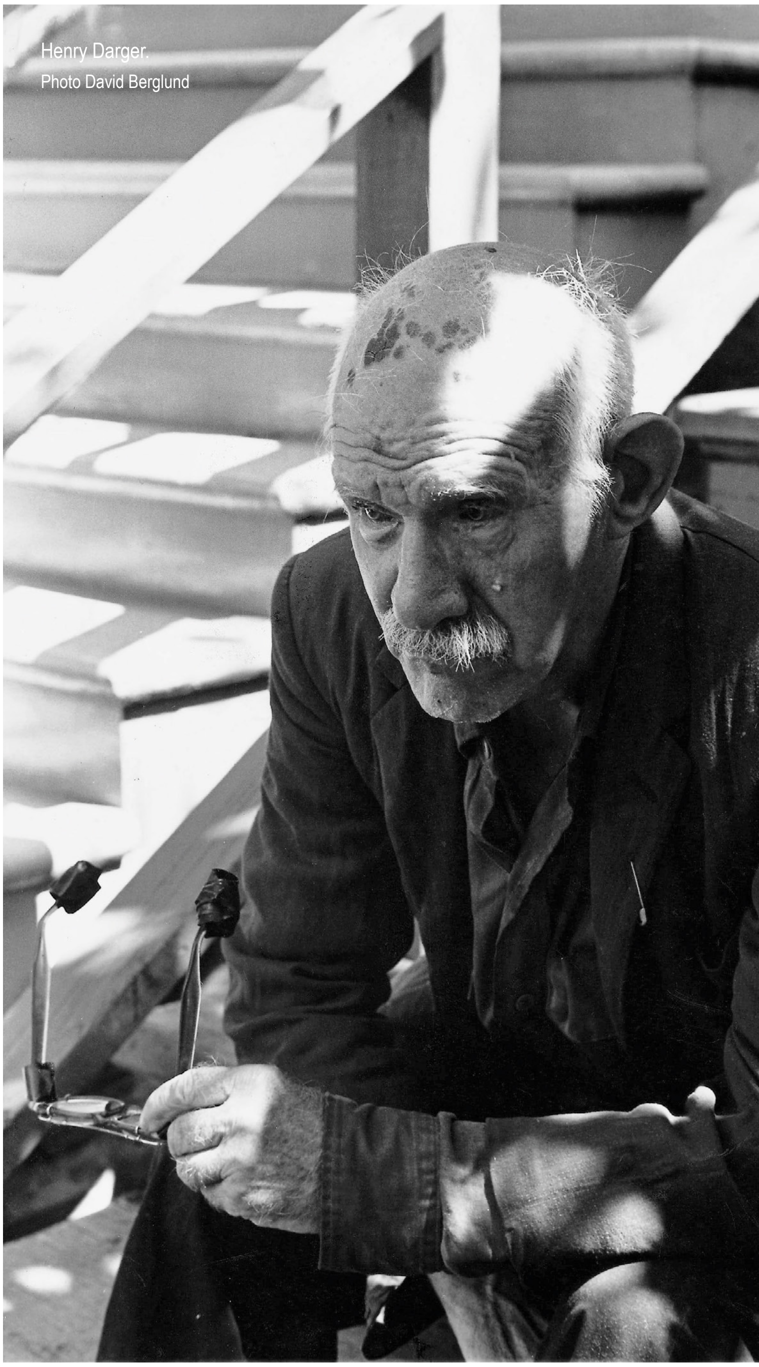
Anyone not familiar with Henry Darger's work might at first glance mistake his drawings of children in fairy-tale like surroundings as childrens' book illustrations – charming and a little naïve. But not for long. A second, closer look reveals the dark side of images in which naked child-like devils, soldiers and monsters disturb the apparent harmony to create a web of complex storytelling. By mixing bucolic dream-like scenes with horrific massacres, Darger creates a tension in the works which has been widely interpreted by art historians and which catches the viewer again and again through an uncanny and unsettling marriage of innocence and danger. Visual (and written) storytelling can't get richer and denser.

The work: Visions and Stories

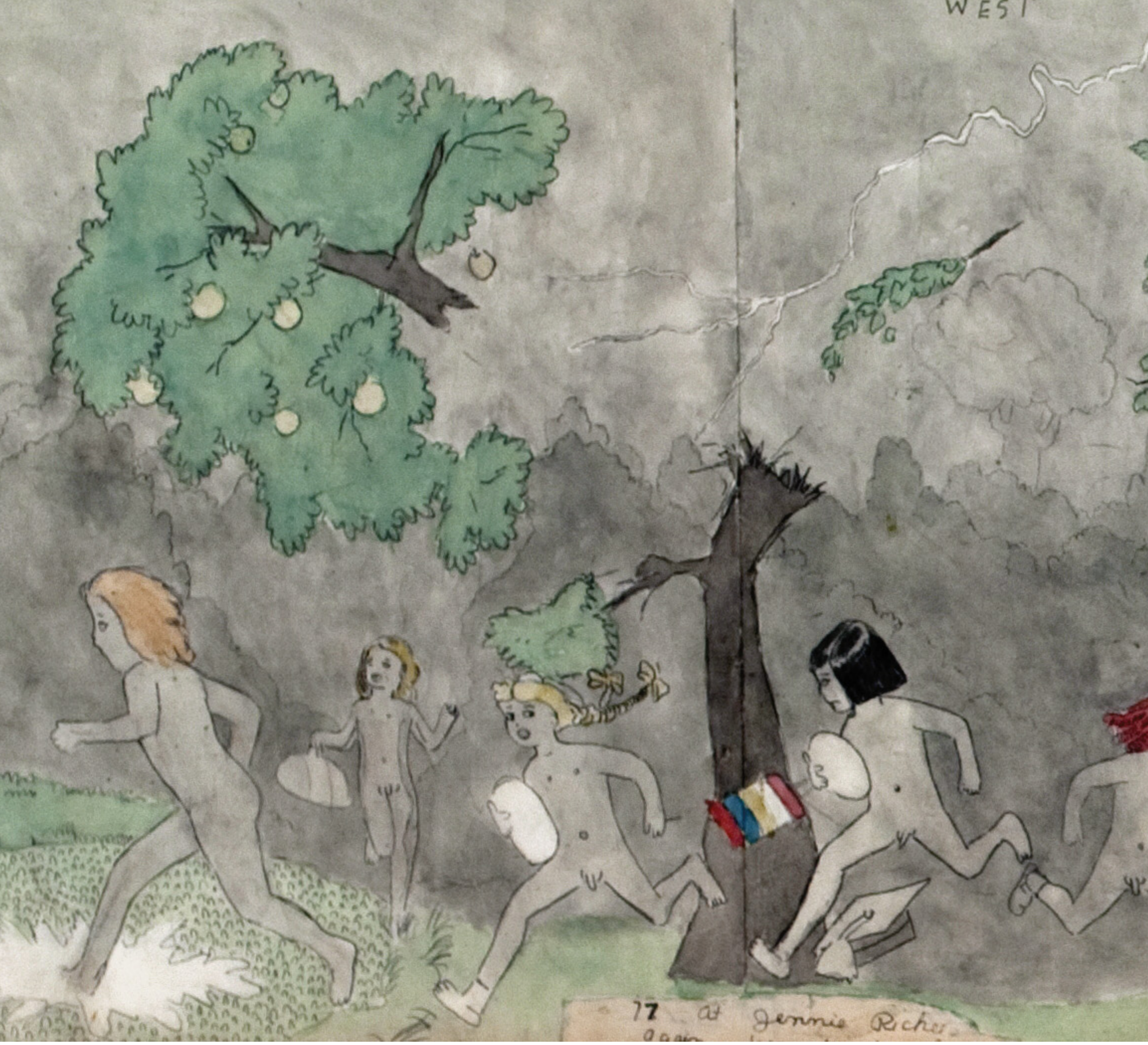
His major work is the manuscript for the novel *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*, 15,145-pages long, single-spaced typed manuscript in 15 volumes which he wrote by hand starting in the 1910s. Later on he typed and partly hand-bound, as well as illustrated, the manuscript. The story is about a girl's army fighting to free child slaves from adults; a nearly classic tale of good against evil with all the ingredients an adventure story needs.

In his hundreds of surviving individual large-scale paper drawings, Darger combines pencil and watercolor sketching and painting with a stencil technique he invented, whereby he transferred cut or photocopied images from popular magazines onto his scrolls to create mixed media collages which could be as wide as 10 feet, often painted on both sides. He combined these different techniques in single drawings, often using tracing techniques to create his characters as well as drawing free hand. With a strong feeling for composition, the self-taught artist created complex narratives consisting of seemingly familiar scenes with children juxtaposed to the often-exotic motifs of evil mythological figures. His skill in the execution of his images is surprising, ranging from carefully drawn outlines of people and painterly washed scenes and landscapes showing a great sense of color for a vast array of characters: children, adults and anything else fantasy can dream up.

Being self-taught does not mean however that Darger was not inspired by imagery surrounding him. The obsessive collection of trash he collected from the streets contained magazines and journals from which he would use images and comic strips as source materials for his works (arranged often in a vast array of scrap books) as well as elements and characters from of his favorite children's books of which he possessed a large number throughout his life. Art historians have pointed also towards his knowledge and awareness of vernacular religious stories and catholic images known to him since his own childhood. He was furthermore following and collecting news stories involving children, most prominently the death of a young girl who went missing in 1911. It seems that his own difficult



Henry Darger.
Photo David Berglund

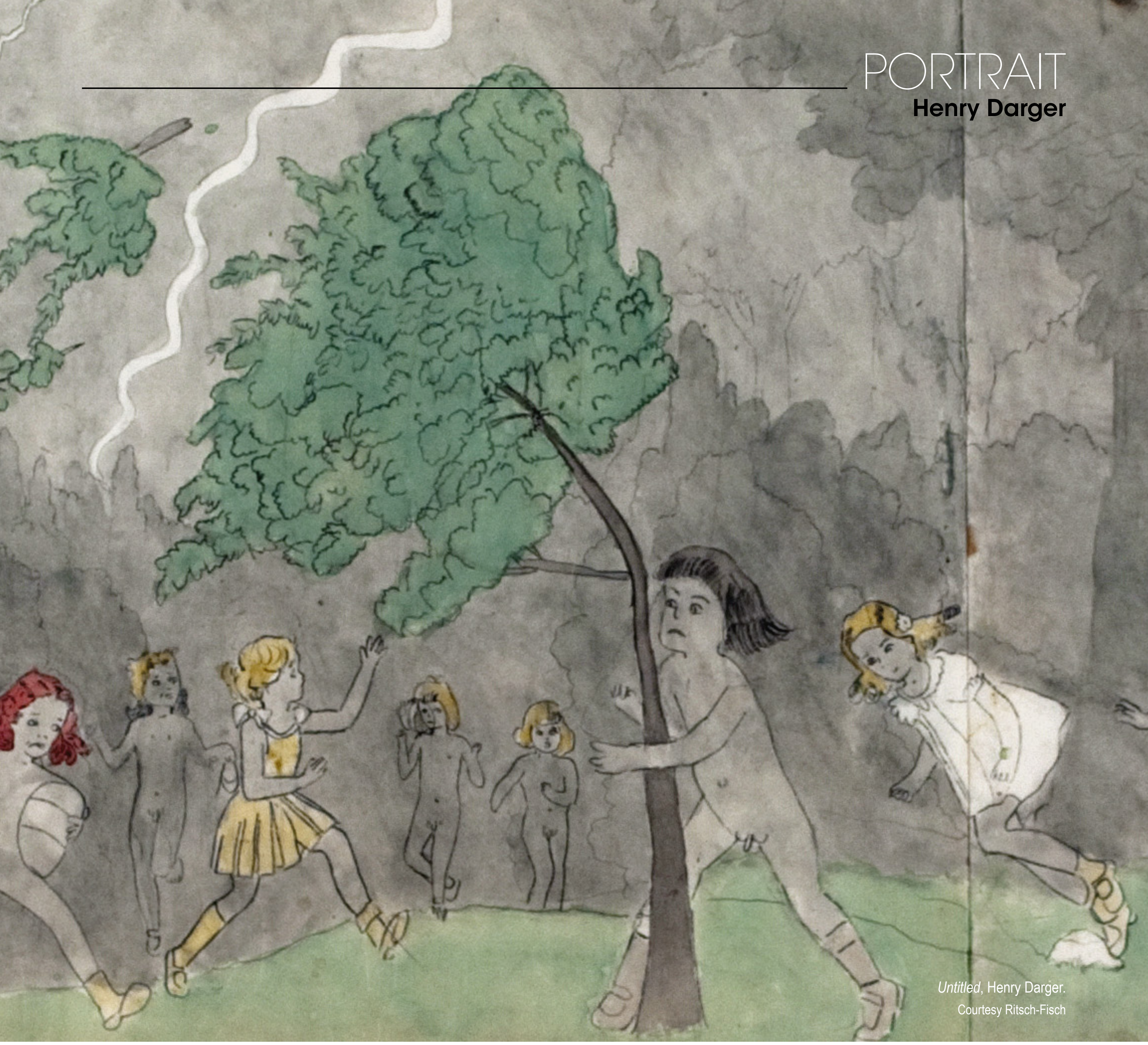


upbringing, together with his observations of children under duess around him, turned him into an ardent supporter of children's rights, calling himself a protector of children in his novels.

Today we would say he was well versed in popular culture, appropriating anything he could find to assemble his imaginary worlds. His unique universe consisted of fantasies and myths around good and evil, played out in his mind but recounted in his complex tales and images. His thinking seems to have been based on a mix of personal experiences as well as tales dominated by religious thoughts. The little we know points to the fact that while he lived a very poor and simple life in his hometown Chicago, he was by no means uneducated and probably was probably of considerable intelligence.

A Solitary Life

Henry Joseph Darger Jr was born in April 1892 at 350 West 24th Street in Chicago as the son of a lame tailor. He was born into an important and ever-expanding city he only left twice during his life, first, when he was shipped to a children's asylum in Illinois for a few years and then when he was briefly drafted to serve in World War I – in Texas. His mother died of fever when he was four years old giving birth to a baby sister who was given up for adoption. He remained with his father who supported him until he turned eight. When his father had to be taken to a care home, he was admitted to a catholic orphanage and sent to public school before he was institutionalized in the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children in Lincoln, Illinois, where he was exposed to an abusive environment of forced labor and bullying. Speculation about why he was moved there range from assumptions of Tourette Syndrome (in his autobiography he wrote he made noises during class) to allegations of masturbation and a mind "that wasn't in the right place". After several attempts to escape, he finally managed to return to Chicago at the age of sixteen. He found menial work as a janitor and dishwasher at a Catholic hospital; working in different such institutions, he managed to sustain himself and lead a very modest life on the edge of society for the next 45 years until his retirement in 1963, ten years before his death in 1973 at the age of 81. Living a reclusive and isolated life, Darger kept to a strict daily routine of visiting mass and going to work, while manically collecting trash from the streets, which he sorted into collections of objects such as shoes, eyeglasses, balls of string, etc. After having lived in different abodes, in 1930, Darger moved to a small second floor room on Chicago's North Side where he continued to live and work on his writings and drawings until he died in the same care



Untitled, Henry Darger.
Courtesy Ritsch-Fisch

home as his father. His abode was rented by the Chicago photographer Nathan Lerner and his wife, who after his move into care discovered – while aiming a clear out the rooms – a huge body of work under heaps of "trash" consisting of journals, drawings, an autobiography, a weather journal and illustrations and manuscripts for a number of books of fiction.

Stories and their market

One would like to end here and state that the rest of the story is history. However, it is only this history that has created the artist Henry Darger. Lerner obviously didn't throw Darger's possessions out but took ownership of them. Without him, Darger's work would have most likely been thrown away and we would never have known about it. Lerner took control of Darger's estate and over the following years promoted it through publications, exhibitions and films, a task which is still supported by his now widow Kiyoko Lerner. Darger's death of course coincided with the "birth" of outsider art in America and especially in Chicago where it fell on fruitful ground, both institutionally and in regards to developing a dedicated place for the work. Admirers of the work quickly began to visit Darger's studio/living space, while a first exhibition took place at the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago 1977, followed quickly by the inclusion of his work in a number of outsider artist group shows both in the US and in Europe. The marketing and promotion activities around his work were then successfully supported by the first of a number of gallery exhibitions. In 1980, Chicago dealer Phyllis Kind took his work to her gallery space in New York, introducing it not only to fans of outsider art but the international contemporary art scene. Selling in the beginning for a few hundred dollars each, his work is now sold and auctioneered for hundreds of thousands, making his work one of the most expensive of any self- taught artists. We don't need to draw on the comparison to Vincent van Gogh to see the irony here. Thankfully, the Lerner's did not speculate on the commercial success of the artist but aimed to keep the integrity of his multi-layered body of work intact. Most of his novels and manuscripts are kept at the American Folk Art Museum in New York while the content and furnishings of his living/studio space were donated to Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and outsider art in Chicago, creating an ongoing legacy for this unique and also troubled mind. With his almost intuitive taste for popular culture he himself would have probably enjoyed most the ongoing influence of his works on contemporary film maker, artists, writers and singers, who are all creating new variations and stories adding to a life and work that is more fiction than fact in itself.

Stephanie Dieckvoss

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